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## A WIFE'S SORROW.

CONTAINING AN IMPORTANT LESSON TO YOUNG LADIES.

"I don't like the tone of Martha's letter," said Mrs. Barton to her husband one day. Martha was a daughter who had been married for three or four months, and was then living several hundred miles away from the town in which her parents resided.

"Nor do I," was the answer. "If Edward is in anything unkind to her, I have been greatly deceived in him."

"There are peculiarities of character and temperament in every one, that only a close intimacy can make apparent, and Martha has these as well as Edward. It is not improbable that something unseen before has revealed itself since the marriage, and stands as a source of irritation between them."

Mr. Barton sighed. He was very fond of Martha. She had been a pet with him since childhood, and this separation, in consequence of her marriage, was a great trial. The thought of her being unhappy, pained him.

"Suppose," said he, "that we send for her to come home and make us a visit. It is nearly four months since she went away."

"I was going to suggest something different."

"What?"

"A visit to Martha."

"That will be out of the question, at least for me," said Mr. Barton.

"I did not," replied Mrs. Barton, smiling, "expect to include you in the visit."

"Oh, then you propose to take all the pleasure to yourself. Now, it strikes me as a better arrangement to have Martha pay us a visit. It will do her a great deal more good, than merely to receive a visit from you. She will get back for a little while into her old home, and see father and mother both."

"I've thought of that," replied Mrs. Barton, "and yet favor this visit to Martha. The reason is this: if I go there and stay a week or two I shall have an opportunity to see how she and Edward are getting along together. We must live with people you know, to find out all about them. There may be some little impediments to happiness lying right in their path, which I may help them to pick up and cast aside."

"I guess you are right, taking that view of the case," said Mr. Barton.

The visit of Mrs. Barton was made accordingly. After the first brief season of gladness that followed a meeting with her mother had passed, Martha's countenance showed some lines not written there by sweet content. The mother asked no question, however, in the beginning, calculated to bring Martha out. She wanted a little time for observation. The young husband was bright, cheerful, attentive and fond, as he had appeared to her before the wedding day. But on the second morning after her arrival, she noticed that he did not talk so freely as usual at the breakfast table, and had something very much like a cloud over the sunshine of his countenance. Martha's manner was a little constrained, also, and her face a little sober. Once or twice during the meal, Edward exhibited a feeling of annoyance at things not rightly ordered.

Mrs. Barton was already beginning to see the little impediments and obstructions to which she had referred in talking to her husband. But she did not encourage Martha to speak on the subject. She wanted to see more and understand the case better. On the third day, the cause of trouble between Edward and Martha—for a discordant string was really jarring in the harmony of their lives—became more clearly apparent to the mother. The little external restraint which had been assumed at the beginning of her visit, by both of the young people, was gradually laid aside, and she saw them in the real life they were living.

The basis of the difficulty lay in the total unsuitness of Martha for the position she had assumed—that of housekeeper, I mean. And, in consequence, her young husband, in whose ideal of a home perfect order had been included, found everything so different from his anticipations, that a graceful acquiescence was impossible.

"I don't know what has come over Edward," said Martha to her mother on the morning of the fourth day, after her husband had left for his place of business. Her eyes were swimming in tears, for Edward had spoken hastily and with ill-nature at the breakfast table. "He used to be so kind, so gentle, so considerate of my comfort and feelings. But he seems to be more impatient and harsh in his manner every day."

"Has the reason of this never occurred to you?" Mrs. Barton's manner was grave. "He is disappointed in something, evidently. He does not find in you all that he expected."

"Mother!" The young wife had a startled look.

"It must be so, Martha, else why should he be different from what he was. He has had an ideal of a wife, and you have failed to reach that ideal."

The face of Martha, which had flushed, became a most pale.

"And I am free to own," continued the mother, "that you fall considerably below my ideal. I do not wonder at Edward's disappointment."

Tears began to fall over the young wife's cheeks. "I'm sure," said she, sobbing, "that I've been to him all that I know how to be. If love would draw upon me favor and kindness he would never look upon me as he does, sometimes with cold eyes and a clouded face, nor speak in angry impatient words that have hurt me worse than blows."

"But you have not done for him all that you know how to do," said Mrs. Barton.

"I fail to comprehend you, mother," was replied to this.

"You do not make his home as pleasant as it should be. There seems to be no anticipation of his wants and no provision against discomfort. Everything is left to your two servants, who do pretty much as they please."

"Why, mother?"

"It is true, my daughter. I have looked on with closely observant eyes, since I have been here, and I must say that I am disappointed in you. In every case that Edward has shown impatience in my presence, the source of annoyance lay in your neglect of a plain household duty. It was so this morning, and so yesterday."

"He was annoyed at the burned steak, this morning," said Martha, in answer. "That was not my fault. I'm not the cook."

"It is your place to have a competent cook," said Mrs. Barton.

"If I can find one, mother."

"The one you have now is not to be trusted to prepare a meal."

"I know that, but how can I help myself?"

"And knowing that you never went near the kitchen to see that she did not spoil the steak intended for your husband's breakfast. It might have taken you ten or fifteen minutes to superintend, personally, the preparation of this morning's meal and so make it worthy of being set before your husband; but instead of this, you sat reading or talking from the time you were dressed until the bell rang. When we went down there was no butter on the table, no knife and no fork to the dish of meat; no salt, nor any napkin to your husband's plate. The tablecloth was soiled, and you scolded the waiter for not putting on a clean one. The meal opened in disorder, which you might have prevented by a little forethought, and progressed and ended in annoyance and bad feeling. Now, who was to blame for all this?"

"But, mother, you don't want me to go into the kitchen and cook!" said Martha.

"The captain who undertakes to sail a ship must know all about navigation. It is more unreasonable to expect that a woman who takes upon herself the obligations of a wife, should know how to conduct a household? Is a woman less responsible in her position than a man? If so, what moral laws give the distinction? I have not seen them. The captain does not trust the ship wholly to the man at the helm. He takes observation, examines charts and sees and knows for himself that everything is done at the right time and in the right place. His thought and his will are active and predominant in every part of the ship, for on him rests all the responsibility. And it is so everywhere in man's work. You ask if I expect you go into the kitchen and cook? I answer yes, in case there is no one else to prepare your husband's food. If you have an incompetent cook, or one not to be trusted, then it is your duty to make up her deficiencies by personal attendance in the kitchen, just as often and just as long as the case may require. You contracted to do this when you became a wife."

"I don't remember that the subject was even referred to," said Martha, who did not yet see clearly, and who felt that her mother's view of the case actually degraded the wife into a household drudge.

"Was it stipulated?" answered Mrs. Barton, "that Edward should engage in business giving himself up to daily care and work in order to secure for his wife the comforts of a home? I don't remember that the subject was even referred to. And yet it was so much implied in the act of assuming the relation that you now hold. Do you suppose for a moment that he isn't active in every part of his business? That he trusts an incompetent clerk as you trust an incompetent cook? Thought, purpose, hands, are all busy in his work, and busy throughout every day; busy for you as for himself. He can't find time for reading four or five hours every day, nor time for calls on pleasant friends. No, no; his work would suffer; losses might follow, and comfort and luxury fail for the wife he

teils for. But his wife is too proud to go down into her kitchen and see that his food is made palatable and healthy; to be present in all parts of his household with taste, order, neatness, economy and cleanliness. I don't wonder that he is disappointed and dissatisfied."

Martha's perceptions were beginning to be a little enlightened. She did not make any reply.

"Let me tell you how I have found it in your badly managed household," then resumed the mother; "perhaps, seeing through my eyes may help you to a better appreciation of things as they really are. Twice, since I have been here, there has been no water in my room, and I have had to come down in the morning and get it for myself."

"Oh, mother! that is too bad! to think Margaret should have been so careless!" The daughter's face crimsoned.

"Now, if you had been a careful housekeeper, or a thoughtful one, you would have visited my chamber to see that all was right there. You would never have left your mother's comfort dependent on the uncertain administration of a servant. Next, the room hasn't been dusted twice since I have been here. My fingers are soiled with everything I touch, and I am sure it hasn't been swept once since I have been here. But this only affects your guests—is only so much taken from their comfort. Let us look to some things involving the comfort of your husband, for these are of the highest consideration. You asked him yesterday morning, to get you some pink-lined envelopes. He brought them at dinner time. He asked you to darn a rent in a black Apron coat, so that he could wear it. Did you do as he requested? No, you read and toyed with fine needlework all the morning, but never touched the coat, and when he asked for it what reply did you make? Oh, you hated darning above all things, and told him he'd better direct his tailor to send for it. The day had become unusually warm, and he had to go out after dinner, wearing a thick cloth coat, just because you had almost wilfully neglected to perform so light a service for your husband. Do you imagine that he never thought of your failure to do for him what he asked? That he didn't feel your indifference to his comfort?"

"And failure, indeed, seems to be the rule under your administration of his household, instead of the exception. Most especially is this the case in what appertains to the dining-room and kitchen. The meals are always badly cooked, and badly served. The slovenliness with which Margaret sets the table is a disgrace to herself, and a standing rebuke to her mistress. I haven't seen a really clean dish—as I have regard to cleanliness, since I have been here. Not a clean knife or fork. Your cruet stand is offensive to the eye. There is a smeared mustard bottle, with a smeared spoon—a catsup bottle with half an inch of tomato catsup at the bottom, and an oil bottle empty. Pepper and vinegar bottles I will not describe. The cruet stand itself is as dark as lead; and the napkin rings and spoons are not much better."

"Pray stop, mother!" said Martha, interposing, with a face nearer scarlet than white.

"No, I must say a word further. Can such things be and escape your husband's observation? Can such things be and not irritate him at times into unkindness? He would be more than mortal, my child, were he temper-proof against things like these."

Martha was not a fool—though there are too many in her position, we are sorry to say, to whom the word most significantly applies. She saw, through her mother's clearer vision, the blindness in which she had been, and the folly of defective household admiration; saw that, in holding herself above domestic duties and manipulations, she was governed more by her pride and indolence than a just regard for wifely or womanly dignity; saw that, to hold fast her husband's love, she must do for him more than to offer loving words; for life being real and earnest, demanded earnest work from all—from the delicate wife as well as from the more enduring husband.

On the next morning, as Edward lifted his cup to his lips, he said, with a smile of pleasure—

"What fine coffee, Martha! I don't know when I have tasted anything so delicious. Your handiwork, I infer?" And Edward looked from his wife to her mother.

"No," replied Mrs. Barton; "it is none of my handiwork."

"But it's mine," said the young wife, who could not keep back the acknowledgment—her pleasure in seeing her husband's pleasure was so great.

"Yours?" Edward sat down his cup and looked across the table in real surprise.

"Yes, mine. I made the coffee this morning."

"You did? Well, as I said, it is delicious! I wouldn't give this cup of coffee for all the stuff that has been made in this house since we entered it."

The steak was praised next.

"Did you cook this also?" asked the husband.

"I superintended the work," was answered.

"It is only necessary for some people to look at things, and they will come all right," said Edward, "and I shouldn't wonder if you belonged to that number."

There was a compliment and reproof in the sentence—both were felt.

"Do I need to say another word, my daughter," said Mrs. Barton, when she was alone with Martha again.

"I think not, mother," was answered. "Since your talk yesterday, I have been looking at my place from a new standpoint, and I find that I have not understood my duties. But they are very plain now, and I shall not need another reminder. Young girls fall into some strange notions about a wife's condition. They think of it as something more ornamental than useful—as invested with a more queenly dignity than a homely administration of service in the household. She is to be loved and petted, and cared for by untiring devotion and tenderness; but caring for her husband in the unattractive uses of a family—in the kitchen, if need be—does not enter some imaginations as a thing at all included in the relation of husband and wife."

"And coldness, irritation, ill nature, and too often alienation, are the consequences," said Mrs. Barton. "You felt a change in your husband. Did not the cause present itself?"

"Not until you pointed it out to me."

"Can it be possible that you were so blind, my daughter?"

"I was just so blind, mother."

"Do you wonder that Edward was annoyed at times?"

"I wonder that he had so much forbearance," was the reply. "I wonder that he did not speak out plainly, and tell me my duty."

"You might not have understood him," said Mrs. Barton. "He could not have said all that I have said. There would have been the appearance of a selfish regard for his own comfort. Young wives do not always understand a husband's reproving words, which are more apt to blind than enlighten; for they are usually spoken under the impulse of chafed feelings. It is better, therefore, that I should have helped you to see clearly in matters involving so many consequences."

## AN EMIGRANT DROWNED.

By a note from Mr. C. McBee, who was one of the party, we are informed that a man named Isaac Skillman or Skillman was drowned in Bear river, near Emery and Hunsacker's ferry, on Saturday, the 27th of June ultimo. He is represented to have been on his way to California with a small drove of mules belonging to "Blair and Stillman," but of what town, county or State, our informant said not.

It appears from the statement made by Mr. McBee, that the unfortunate man instead of having his mules ferried, undertook to swim them across the river, and that to facilitate the operation he mounted a horse and plunged into the river to swim his charger in advance of the mules, which were drove in after to follow their leader. Not being a good swimmer or from the mismanagement of the rider, after getting into deep water, the horse went under several times, when Skillman, or Skillman (we know not which, as both names are used in the communication) became alarmed, got off his horse and let him go, after which, being no swimmer, the man managed to keep his head above water for some time and then he sunk—one of the ferrymen, who was swimming to assistance, being within a short distance of him at the time. Search was made for the body, but it was not found.

Another man belonging to the party came near losing his life, as stated; for, in jumping into the river to go to the assistance of the one who was drowning his feet stuck in the mud, from which he with difficulty extricated himself. It is stated that the deceased was a native of Michigan, that his mother and sister reside in Montgomery county, Illinois, and that two of his brothers are somewhere in Carson Valley, Nevada Territory.

THE WEATHER continues excessively dry. All sign and appearance of rain—which have been but few, however—have failed, as proverbially usual in a dry time.