

DON'T LET MOTHER DO IT.

BY CARRIE ALTON.

Daughter, don't let mother do it!
Do not let her bake and toil,
While you sit, a useless idler,
Fearing your soft hands to soil!
Don't you see the heavy burthens
Daily she is wont to bear
Bring the lines upon her forehead—
Sprinkle silver in her hair?

Daughter, don't let mother do it!
Do not let her bake and broil
Through the long, bright Summer hour;
Share with her the heavy toil,
See, her eye has lost its brightness,
Faded from the cheek the glow,
And the step that once was buoyant,
Now is feeble, weak and slow.

Daughter, don't let mother do it!
She has cared for you so long;
Is it right the weak and feeble
Should be toiling for the strong?
Waken from your listless languor,
Seek her side to cheer and bless,
And your grief will be less bitter
When the sods above her press.

Daughter, don't let mother do it!
You will never, never know
What were home without a mother,
Till that mother lieth low—
Low beneath the budding daisies,
Free from earthly care or pain—
To the home so sad without her
Never to return again.

THE ENGLISH AT HOME.

It was my privilege to see something of the English in two country houses of different character. One was about sixty or seventy miles from London, in a rich, well-tilled country—an old fashioned stone house in the centre of the property, within half an hour's walk of a small village. An American backwoodsman would have described the whole country as town, the landscape was so closely dotted with houses. There was bluff, cordial hospitality in my reception, with that effort to suppress feeling inherent in English character.

Everything was simple, solid, and comfortable. The host, known as the squire, a hale, hearty man of fifty, asked me the morning after my arrival if I would take "a bit of a turn." Supposing this to be an invitation to go over his grounds, I assented, when I was led off in a brisk walk for five miles and the return, making ten. The squire was evidently trained to the exercise and did not feel it, while I was much fagged. The excursions together in the neighborhood were of every day. For a mile round were two or three fine dwellings, the rest small tenements, of which many were whitewashed and thatched; fine roads bordered with hedges, rolling sweeps of ground in lawn or forest or under cultivation. There were many haunts in these walks. The squire called out with his sonorous voice to the laborers in the field touching the crops; hung over the gates and fences to talk with the women and children concerning their domestic affairs, from which it appeared that the cottagers were in frequent relations with the folks of the hall in the way of gifts of coal, clothing, food, and medicine. The questions concerning the ills of a family, its misfortunes and hopes, were many, put with a bluff voice and impassable face. When the widow and the orphan whimpered in the account of their troubles, as they did in one or two instances, the voice of the squire grew harder, but he blew his nose and complained of a cold.

In a school of thirty or forty pupils we listened to the recitations, when the squire's mask of indifference could not altogether hide a gleam of satisfaction. Learning from the teacher that the establishment was of my companion's creating and kept up at his expense, I ventured a word of praise, when he returned in a voice of deprecation:

"This sort of thing pleases my wife, you know. It's one of her pets."

Thus did his worst foot go foremost in what related to himself, which is second nature in the best English type.

The women curtsied to us on the high-road and in the houses, and I remarked on the singularity of the proceeding.

"Ay, ay; the lasses haven't been to dancing-school, as you see," was the squire's remark, when I explained that the act was referred to and not the manner.

"To you democratic Americans, I dare say, it does look odd. I tell them it is useless to bob up and down in that absurd way, but they will do it."

The master of the house was of the old fox-hunting school, and his dinners were solid, flanked with sherry and port. In compliance with old customs,

the women retired toward the end of the repast, the cloth was removed, and decanters of port on wheels were placed on the naked table, labelled in silver with their respective ages. These were industriously pushed around, each pouring a generous portion as they went by. The clergyman of the neighboring church was generally one of the guests and helped himself as liberally as the others. When the decanters had several times made the circuit of the table, I endeavored to excuse myself from further libation on the score of lack of capacity. With that bluntness characteristic of the Anglican race, I was requested not to be such a Miss Nancy, and pooh-pooed in chorus. There was no help for it, and I was obliged to empty my glass with the rest. This continued for nearly two hours, when we arose from the table and marched unsteadily for the drawing-room to join the hostess and her friends. For my own part, I am persuaded that it would have been difficult for me to say, *The scenery is truly rural about here.* My companions, whose libations had been more copious than mine, were probably thicker of utterance and more obtuse of eye and brain than I. The advent into the drawing-room of this befuddled group in dinner garb was singular, but elicited no manifestation of surprise or remark from the women, who had evidently grown accustomed to it.

From their thick tongues came heavy platitudes, and compliments *a bout port* to the women, occasioning a little feminine tittering, accompanied by the boisterous "Ha, ha!" of these Squire Westerns under the reign of Queen Victoria. One fell into a doze, the others settled down into rudders of whist. In an hour strong tea was served, restoring the sleeping *convive* to wakefulness, and the company to something like animation. At an early hour all retired. The next morning saw them up early, without a sign of the previous night's wassailing on their ruddy faces.

A soft, damp climate, fanned by the salt-sea wind, and vigorous exercise, gave them stomachs that bore these daily burdens with ease. They were free of the American malady, dyspepsia. There was strong food and stronger drink, but no especial disturber of the stomach's repose. The fortified Briton might manage our incongruities without much detriment; but we, sustained neither by climate nor out-of-door exercise, must regard the task as hopeless.

This household may be regarded as representative, for England is full of such. A sense of duty was the leading trait, which showed itself in taking care of the poor, providing instructions for the needy young, contributing to different charitable societies, subscribing for religious journals and magazines, sending tracts and missionaries to the heathen, going regularly to church—the wife teaching a class in the Sunday-school. Their pleasures seldom appeared to be completely unalloyed, as it is with French and Italians; conscience seemed to question them at untimely seasons. They were happiest when pushing the decanters about on wheels, which put the too watchful monitor to sleep. The traditional explanation in France of this vein of sadness in the English character—and the American has it also—is that it comes from the spleen, supposed to be disordered from mode of life. This explanation of a question of race and moral training is very Gallic. If the beyond-channel critics would look closer, they would doubtless find that the Englishman is possessed of psychological gloom, as the lark is joyous, the dog is faithful, and the owl is mournful.

This representative man, the squire, was simple, frank, blunt, hospitable, with virile mind and body. He was public-spirited, read the *Times* every day, personally superintended one of his own farms, was director in a neighboring railway, and knocked about in an active way for several hours, which worked off the bulky nourishment and heavy draughts of old port. Besides, a sword of Damocles hung over his toes and stimulated him to this exercise, for he was afraid of the gout.

There was a calm, gloomy satisfaction in the performance of his religious duties. In theology, he had discovered all the shadows and overlooked much of the sunshine. The Americans have the same trait, inherited from English fathers. These soul-troubles have ever afflicted the race since it attained to anything like civilization. Whatever our system of theology may be, we are sure to find its thorns, while the Latins as unerringly discover its roses. The Catholic Church, for example, in France and Italy, from an æsthetic point of view, is attractive; in England it becomes austere and bare in comparison.

The heavy feeding of the squire made

his mind slower in its operations, but it does not follow that they were less thorough than those of the nervous American. There is the broadness and bulk in the Briton which sustains prolonged effort. Light flanks and weak stomachs are sorry backing for a vigorous brain. The Englishman may beat about in superfluous strokes before accomplishing his object, but his reserve of vitality is such that he can afford it. Generous nourishment gives him animal contentment. The traditional grumbling has been somewhat exaggerated; besides, this reputation comes to him from the Continent, where they withhold from him his roast beef, strong cheese, and ale, which puts him in a bad humor. A mastiff, without his usual supply of food, becomes savage. Given a liberal supply of ale and port, the massive joint, and that singular combination of lettuce and Cheshire peculiar to England, a republicanized monarchy or a monarchized republic, plenty of out-of-door exercise, personal contact with the horse, his newspaper, his fireside, and his religion, and he is as happy as a man of this kind may be.

Another house in which I was an inmate some ten days was further from London than the former, situated also in a beautiful, rolling country. Its occupants were higher in the social scale than those of the other household. They had a town-house in the West End of London, and moved in the caste-circles of that quarter. They had lived in most of the capitals of Europe, were well-mannered and familiar with current events, spoke good English, and one or two other languages with reasonable facility. Besides myself were nine or ten guests, whose acquaintance I made as quickly as if we had been Freemasons. The quick, frank way of taking a stranger into the confidence of the household, is one of the most agreeable features of English country life.

The family consisted of an elderly lady and her daughters. At nine o'clock of the morning a bell was rung, which was a summons to religious service conducted in a great hall, where the mistress stood at one end; on one side, the family and guests, or those of them who were up, in a row; and on the other side in a similar row, the servants. All were provided with the prayer-book of the Established Church as they came in, and the mistress read the service, to which the responses were distinctly made. Not more than half of the guests were usually at this service, which was not taken amiss, independence being regarded as one of the guest's chief rights. At half-past nine the major part of the household were at breakfast. After preparing it on the table and sideboard, the servants retired without exception. The women poured tea and coffee for the men, and each helped herself as he pleased. The men carved meats at the sideboard for the tea-pourers and themselves, which gave to the repast the abandon of a picnic. The absence of servants allowed the conversation to be free and intimate, which was evidently the object in dispensing with them.

After breakfast there was general lounging. No apparent effort was made to amuse the guests, who enjoy the freedom of hotel life without its publicity. At eleven the letters and newspapers came down from London, when the society occupied itself in reading or writing letters. There was a well-selected library of five thousand volumes, to which, with others, I often repaired to while away a half hour. Besides this, packages occasionally arrived from Mudie's, containing the latest books. The men were garbed in easy morning suits of gray—some in knickerbockers instead of trousers, their feet incased in stout leather-stringed shoes; the women in simple robes, their heads covered with flats. During the hour following breakfast there was polite badinage and a little flirtation, as the members of this colony sauntered about the veranda or leaned against its columns.

At half past one or two, lunch, at which were discussed the projects of the day. Rides on horseback or in carriages, fishing parties, shooting excursions, or walks, usually followed, consuming the afterpart of the day. Walks and shooting were generally in favor with the men, when they did not feel constrained by gallantry to join the excursions planned by the ladies.

The subject of pounds, shillings, and pence was never mentioned. No business talk of any kind. London business men were referred to by one or two in a tone containing a suspicion of something not complimentary. The chief question was recreation.

Between six and seven in the evening one could see lights glancing through the windows of the bed-chambers. The

house was occupied in making its toilet. After seven the drawing-rooms, brilliantly lighted, wore a festive air. The change was striking. Those whom one had seen an hour before in coarse gray suits and stout shoes, simple robes and straw flats, were arrayed in black swallow-tails and white cravats, *décolleté* silk and satin, the bared arms and bosoms glistening with ornaments. At half past seven the company passed into the dining-room, where a bright chandelier shone down on a broad table adorned with flowers and sparkling with crystal, while an imposing array of handsomely dressed servants stood in the background.

The dinner usually lasted from an hour to an hour and a half, and was garnished with pleasant humor and some rather heavy wit. It had not the spontaneity and quick repartee of the French dinner, because Englishmen are not Frenchmen, who seem to have been created to shine in a prandial way.

From conversation in this house and elsewhere, during my sojourn in England, I learned that the English have less affinity with the French than the Americans. They have more of the German characteristics than we. Besides, several members of the royal family have married Germans, which gives German ideas and the German language a certain vogue. Most of the women and many of the men of the higher class understand the language. The Englishman on his travels, by predilection, goes to Germany, Italy, or the East. Americans who travel go to Paris;—the good reach it after death, as the proverb tells us. It is perhaps the Celtic blood coming from Ireland which thus modifies our character and given us that leaning to the people on the other side of the Channel, not possessed by the English.

When the women retired from the table, the cloth was not removed; the table was allowed to remain as it was. Heavy drinking did not follow the departure of the better part of mankind, as in the fox-hunting establishment; at most a couple of glasses, then coffee and a cigar, the time thus occupied not exceeding half an hour, when the men, with a proper degree of decorum—gay without being drunk—joined the dames. There was much less consumption of port in this than the house first described, and a freer use of Burgundy, Bordeaux, and champagne, the latter, contrary to Continental custom, being drunk at the beginning of the dinner.

The tones employed by the English in conversation are truer and healthier than those of the Americans. They use chest-notes with all their healthy vibrations from the lungs upward. In America, the voice is high-pitched, and most of it comes from the head; the practice, at least, is so general as to render it a national trait. New England, as the cradle of this nasal bantling, must be held responsible. The fault of the South, as, "befo' the wah"—full and round, the r's suppressed—is generous and harmonious in comparison. But by way of compensation, New England also furnishes the best English—that spoken in Boston.

The material life in this hospitable mansion was pleasant. To American ears, accustomed to suppressed, laconic humor, the English humor is somewhat slow and boisterous. In the lower classes, one is fairly knocked down by it as with a bludgeon. In the theatres the average sense of humor is seen to be less subtle than with us; the points are made so strong as to become wearisome. The words of bandinage which pass between a couple of New Yorkers are telegrams in comparison. This slowness is such that one often anticipates the coming word. They are not, however, given to long stories as the Americans are, for which they deserve a good mark.

A gulf separates the working people from the inmates of the hall, in education, intelligence and manners. No such distance separates any two classes in America. The laboring people in the neighborhood were thick-headed, ignorant bores, speaking imperfect English, who had not an idea beyond beef and beer. The occupants of the hall were better bred, perhaps, than the better class in the United States, but without their quickness and elasticity of character. It has taken a number of generations to produce this cultivated Englishman. Like the thorough-bred horse, he has come to his present perfection through long training and breeding, extending back through a number of fathers and mothers. He has almost lost the objectionable characteristics of his race. He is polished, dignified, and manly. In artistic education, as well as by race, he is not more than a respec-