Women of Today

BAB TELLS THE STORY OF CELESTINE AND LITTLE JO.

A True Incident of Life Among the Lowly.

I notice I was annoyed at being interrupted. When one is comfortable, with the fire in front of one is bright, when one's back is interesting, the fact that it is cold outside and that other people are suffering does not seem to affect one as it should. So, when she said that Celestine wanted to speak to me, I looked cross, I felt irritated, and I got up with no outward show of amiability, for there was no inward feeling of that sort. And I never was a good actress. Celestine is our laundress. She is large. Indeed, she seems to be one huge smile that weighs nearly 200 pounds. In describing herself she invariably says that she is "fair," and though that may be the color of Celestine's skin, she has the whitest heart that was ever made. When she saw me, she put up her hands and said, "It's Jo!" I looked annoyed, and Celestine looked apologetic, and then, after a moment's silence, during which I got back to my normal good nature, she said, "It was soon as if there weren't no place for him." Then I felt a pain right in my heart. Christmas week and no place for a boy 16 years old! A city full of philanthropy and not a human being but a poor colored laundress to care for this boy.

This is the story of Jo. He's just Jo. If he ever had another name, it has been forgotten. He was a boy who always seemed all corners; she never looked comfortable. In cold time his hands were chapped, and his feet ever bootless. In the summer time he had the chills, and he had the hives. Originally Jo came from the poorest part of North Carolina. He was the son of a colored preacher who was glad on taking his congregation about love, charity, peace and good will and she beat Jo so dreadfully that when he was 7 years old the elders of the church complained to the justice of the peace. So was put on a baggage train and sent his way to New York, and then some society took care of him, and feeling that he had more aches and pains and was more amiable than the average boy the society boarded him out, paying the munificent sum of $1 per week for his keep. Celestine being warm, Celestine took him, and through my acquaintance with her I met him. For several years, in the intervals of the various ills, he was our errand boy and was recommended by us to anybody who wished a handy boy. But, alas! poor Jo. Whenever he got that weight he called a permanent situation, his frostbites overcame him, or we have got the better of him, according to the season, and he would return to Celestine as an undesirable piece of goods. Then, through another society, a farmer took him, and for once in his 22-lived life he was happy. He had only had enough to eat, but he absolutely had time to play. He grew to know every bird and every flower in that county, and he met me a snake skin for a present, and Celestine's little boy had a box of fresh eggs come to him, laid especially to order by a small black hen that the farmer's wife had given Jo for his very own. But Celestine and I felt that this couldn't last. It was too good. So after ten months of absolute happiness Jo was returned to us. He had lost an a rusty nail, and it had gone into his bare foot, and the farmer was afraid that lockjaw would result. Then Jo got into a hospital. He liked it pretty well there, but having tasted the delights of country life you cannot keep him for not longing to stay in bed with one foot tied up, could you? So was declared better and put out.

Poor Jo was not strong enough to work. The farmer refused to take him back, still bearing lockjaw, and up to this time he has been living with Celestine, and up church money has gone towards supporting him. My church money, by the bye, is a fiction—that is, so far as church is concerned. At the Priests meeting they do not take up a collection, and so I keep my church money for whoever may need it. And you would be surprised to know the number of demands there are for it. Bless us it is. Now, Celestine had come to intimate that it seemed as if Jo's foot was getting bad again, and still they said not take him at the hospital. The church money was got out, and Celestine was given a note to the most fashionable and the most cynical man I know. He responded to it by a bank note and some other things, and today I went to see Jo. Jo is not bad. He is distinctly black, and when he laughs, and for all his troubles, he does laugh now a while, he shows the whitest teeth you ever saw in your life. After I had passed the compliments of the day with him he said, "Miss, that fine gentleman sent me the most pretty nightgown you ever seed!" I looked at him three, and I saw that Jo was robed in a soft flannel gown, with the collars and cuffs embroidered in pale blue, and I realized that my fashionable and cynical friend had responded in more than one way to my request.

Then Jo went on to talk, for he was pretty sick, and his brain was wandering. After a little bit he asked: "Ain't it where, Miss, that all over this pure big world there don't never seem to be any place for Jo? What is the matter with me? I ain't like the beapes in the Bible. I ain't got anything the matter with me 'cept a nail in my foot, but just as there ain't no place for me in this world I go to a place just as there there something happens to me, and people say, 'Jo, you've got to get some place else.' Out there in the country it did seem as if it was big enough for the other people and for me too. But, no, that there nail had to go and get in my foot, and that there farmer gentleman said, 'Jo, I'm afraid you might get something wrong with you.' And here I comes back to Celestine, and Celestine's got plenty of her own to keep, and there don't so many people give out washing nowadays. Celestine touched me to iron, and I could help her on the rough pieces. But, no, there had to come a dull sort of feeling in my back, and I can't hold the iron, and I'm afraid I will drop it on some of the chillen, and Missy Celestine, she's put me in her bed. It's mighty pleasant being here, but it don't seem right. It seems as if I always got into somebody else's place and as if there wasn't no place in the world for Jo."

The doctor came in then, and he looked at Celestine and he looked at me, and he asked me if the boy had any relatives, and I told him none by the ties of blood, but one by the grace of God—the woman in whose house he was staying—and I moved away from where I was sitting and let Celestine come near. She said to me in a low voice, "Do you think Jo is going to die?" but she didn't speak so low but Jo heard her, and he said, with a gleam of reason: "Ain't that just Jo's luck? Going to die on Celestine's hands and put her to the expense of a funeral, when she's got the Daughters of Rachab, they won't carry a hoss." After a little while I came away, meaning to be back in an hour or two with some cool drinks and some delicate jellies for poor Jo. But death waits for nobody, and when I reached the rough looking tenement house there was a bit of black alpaca tied on Celestine's bell. I went up stairs very quietly and into the plain little kitchen. There was Celestine, sharp, as I never had seen her before, and talking to her brother. She said: "I don't care what you say. He shan't be buried like a pauper. Poor little Jo never had any place here, but he shall have a decent place when he is dead, if we go without coal all winter and none of us have anything to eat." I put my hand on her shoulder, and I whispered to her of some good, quiet Quaker ladies who would help her, and I told her positively that nobody need go hungry because of poor Jo, while in my heart I believed that the recording angel was putting down to the credit of Celestine that righteous indignation of hers that made her determine to give the poor boy a place of his own at the very last.

The next day there was a quiet little funeral, for they don't keep the dead long in tenement houses, and Celestine's minister read the burial service, and poor Jo in death was better dressed than he ever was in life, and he had a very place of his own. The respectable old colored mammies stood around and whispered what a good boy he was, and Celestine told how he tried to help with the ironing and how he would care for the children when she was out at work, and I away in the background thought to myself: "There, but for the grace of God, might go you or me. Drifting through life without a place, belonging to nobody and finding every home too crowded for us, and yet are we any better than was this poor boy? He did his best, and the angels can do no more."

My friends, this is a true story. It has only been a few days since poor Jo was laid to rest, and if I have seemed to tell you of something that was and I have done it because I want you at this gay Christmas time to think of the many other children for whom there is no place. Make a place for them in your heart and in your home. Go out of your way to do something for them, and your own life will be the happier, and your own children will be less likely to suffer for your sins. These little people who are alone want to be thought of while they are here, but I am afraid often that, even now, Dives sits at his table and Lazarus lies alone at his gate.

Bab

MRS. ANNE MORTON LANE.

For the Writing Table.

The newest furnishings for writing tables for women are of leather. And, by the way, writing tables will be more fashionable next season than desks. They are spindle legged, of course, and are enameled or made of wood that matches or harmonizes with the other furniture. The pads to be used on these tables are small, hardly larger than the square sheets of letter paper used on them. The backs and corners are of carved or burnt leather, instead of the long popular silver or decorated china mountings. The burnt leather is of several shades of mode with elaborate design, burnt in dark brown. The effect is dainty and somewhat more feminine than the carved leather. The latter is said to be all imported and therefore too expensive for a moderate purse. The inkstands, mucilage bottles, sealing wax holders, candlesticks, pen and pencil trays, paperweights and the other articles are leather covered and carved or burnt with the same design. The blotting paper to be used with such sets should be made colored or brown to match the leather, and sometimes it has a similar design traced around the edges. For men the fashionable furnishing for desks are of cut glass, stag horn and silver. The inkstands and other large pieces are of cut glass on massive silver mountings, with stag horn top pieces or pen racks. The paper knives have carved silver blades, with handles of stag horn, in some instances also carved, but the most popular are plain and highly polished. Ten staffs of porcupine quills are a novelty. They are silver mounted and beautifully colored, but uncomfortably long.

Market Price of a Broken Heart.

An Indiana woman has been awarded $24,333.33 for a broken heart. It must have been of extra large size, with frills on it. At least it is the only way one can account for the $4,333.33 that she asked for her damages. Perhaps the market price.

THREE WOMEN OF QUALITY IN MODERN JOURNALISM.

Success of Miss Murphy, Mrs. Lane and Miss Bridges.

Woman is not an experiment nor a novice in modern journalism. She is almost a necessity. She has evinced her aptitude for certain work in such a thorough and emphatic manner that we wonder in some instances how we ever got along without her.

Most of these women one never hears of. Others have pushed themselves to the front in such a decided manner as to force themselves to the notice of the public.

One of the many women whose work is well known, but whose personality is as unknown to the public as it is to many of the editors who have accepted her contributions and corresponded with her for years without coming in contact with her, is Miss Madeline S. Bridges.

Her writings have all been done in the seclusion of her own home. She frequents no newspaper or other office. She is a member of no literary societies or clubs, no church or sect. This exclusiveness, notwithstanding her rank as an artist and her many personal attractions, makes her unique among women, especially literary women.

Miss Bridges is one of a large family and was born in Brooklyn of Irish parentage, her father being the well known Thomas Aimes DeVere, editor and proprietor of the first Williamsburg daily paper, The Morning Post, and later associate editor of The Irish World. Mr. DeVere was a man of no ordinary ability, possessed of a marked individuality. He was interested in all questions appertaining to land reform and for many years one of the best known spokesmen of the Irish question. His associations were with men of literary, philanthropic and humanitarian tendencies, and from him, perhaps no less than from her mother, a woman of true Irish wit, keen intuitiveness and broad grasp of social problems, she received an early impulse toward the beautiful, the poetic—a deep sympathy with the sorrowful, the oppressed, the unfortunate.

A child of 8 years, her little mind began to find expression in rhyme. Like Pope in this regard, she "lisped in numbers, for the numbers came," and at the age of 14 she had the pleasure, for the first time, of seeing some of her verses printed in a New York newspaper. From that time on occasional contributions of great promise for one so young found their way to the journals of the day.

Miss Bridges commenced her education at home under the guidance of a governess, but afterward went to a private school on Brooklyn heights and later to Fort Edward Institute, New York. Among her other studies here were included French, music and drawing, for all of which she evinced a natural aptitude. During her last term at school the prize for the best poem was awarded to her, and on her return home irregular contributions to the various publications of the day began to appear over her own euphonious name of Mary Aimes DeVere.

At that time there was to her no thought of fame or of pecuniary gain. Her father was well to do—one of the largest property holders in Brooklyn—and the title page of her first little book, "Love Songs," expresses in full the motive of her song:

I do her song because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing.

And sing she did, as well that soon the pages of all the leading periodicals of the day, Century, Harper's and Frank Leslie's publications, Lippincott's Magazine, Littell's Living Age, etc., were open to her.

As a translator, too, Miss Bridges has evinced no little ability, translating from the German, French and Spanish, particularly the poems of Bonaldo and Becquer. "Thou and I" and "Pater Dimitte Illis" of Bonaldo are among the most admired of her translations.

Miss Bridges has never been bound by the fetters of office work and declares herself absolutely unable to write to order. There is nothing studied about her productions. Her musings of the moment must be according to her own sweet will.

One of the few ladies to enter upon journalism in the antipodes (apart from Australian natives) is Miss Agnes Murphy, who left her home in Kings county, Ireland, some nine years ago for the colony of Victoria. Miss Murphy is editress of the Melbourne Punch. She is also one of the most active members of the Austral salon, the first woman's club in Australia, which she, in combination with two other ladies, was the means of founding.

Miss Murphy, besides her journalistic work—in which, by the bye, she is renowned for her accurate knowledge of Australian society—takes a public spirited part in the endeavors that are made to promote the study of literature among the younger people of far away Australia. She is a member both of the Royal Society of Victoria and of the Shakespeare society, and to learned societies she frequently contributes papers. Outside of journalism Miss Murphy's most important piece of work has been the writing of some portions of the book "Victoria and Its Resources," which has just been published under the auspices of the Australian government.

That this clever journalist has accomplished much in a short time is proved by the fact that she expresses the hope of being quite free to return to the time she is 35, when she intends to take up literary work in London.

Mrs. Anne Morton Lane who is a regular London correspondent for leading American journals, is not an English woman, as might be supposed from the intimate knowledge of English social life evinced in her letters, but an American. She was born in Philadelphia and resided in the Quaker City until 1890. In that year she accompanied her husband, John Beasley Lane, to England, he having accepted the appointment of London representative of a New York paper. Mrs. Lane's first contribution to journalism was printed ten years ago in the Philadelphia Press, but it was as a London correspondent of the Liverpool Courier that she first attracted notice. She received regular work from, and articles from her pen appeared frequently in The Irish Times of Dublin and The Scottish Leader of Edinburgh. Then she was accepted as a regular contributor to The Times of Philadelphia and the New York Mail and Express.

In addition to her American work, Mrs. Lane has for some time been the dramatic critic of The Lady, the important London weekly owned by Gilson Beales, M. P. All these regular contributions would content most journalists, but Mrs. Lane seems to find time for many special articles in The Gentlewoman and The Princess of London, in The Mercury, The Hub, in The Times of Madras and in Book News of Philadelphia.

When the London Society of Women Journalists was established, four years ago, Mrs. Lane was invited to a seat in the council, a position to which she has been regularly re-elected by the two hundred odd members of the new flourishing society. Mrs. Lane's leisure is divided between her bicycle and her two babies, a boy and a girl, and it may perhaps puzzle some people where she finds that leisure. She does find it, however, and neither "wheel" nor nursery lacks her devotion.

Decorate the Schoolroom.

While we build structures that are pleasing from an architectural point of view and modern in their hygienic devices, we are apt to give too little attention to the attractiveness of the schoolroom itself. Bare walls save where the forbidding blackboard is hung, are the boundaries of the pupils' vision, no thought is given to the best method of so furnishing the room as to make it a delight to the eye and an elevation of the mind. It is true that there are some exceptions, where teachers have, at their own expense, supplied bright and fragrant flowers and appropriate pictures, and thus beautified an otherwise cheerless apartment. Thousands and thousands of children spend several hours each day in the schoolroom, and there is no telling how much they would be benefited by surroundings which would appeal to and stimulate their artistic sense. The cost would not be great, and in most cases a few pennies contributed by the scholars and expended judiciously by a teacher who possesses tact and good taste would revolutionize the place where the children now spend the most receptive years of their lives.

Brighter, prettier, more cheerful schoolrooms ought to be provided. Pictures of great events, replicas in plaster of paris of famous statues, works which represent the genius of the world's greatest artists—all these would help the scholars and equip them in a broader and higher sense for their contact with the world and for the noble and responsible duties of American citizenship.

Some Becoming Styles.

There are few things that cannot be found in plaids this year. A woman may be plaid from head to foot if she will. She will not if she has good taste, for a little plaid goes a long way.

A blouse of black satin is edged all around the top with a design in finest cut jet. The yoke and sleeves are of finely plaited black satin overlaid with medallions of point lace outlined with gold thread. The effect is extremely elegant.

Loose satin blouses without sleeves or yokes are becoming to the woman sufficiently slender to trifle with the whimsies of fashion. They are made like the children's gulmpy waist, a band of jetted satin or velvet passing over the shoulder and a cointure of satin, jewels or velvet drawing in a part of the fullness at the waist. The yokes and sleeves worn with these blouses are usually of a different color and of lighter material. Tucked mousseline or chiffon, beaded tulle, etc., if jet is used. The combination tints possible with this style of bodice are as beautiful as it is bewildering.

Some New Furs.

A stylish tippet is made of Persian lamb. The round collar and long ends in front are finished with stone marten tails and the little animals' heads. A bright silk lining is very effective.

Very many of the new fur boas are long enough to reach the bottom of the skirt in front. Some are made entirely of Russian sable, Siberian bay sable, or stone marten tails. With these has and muffs are often introduced and are simply stunning, worn over light silk bodices or even a ball toilet upon occasions.

Muffs are medium sized, and a very elegant one is of bear fur, daintily lined with a rare little pocket in the back. Very pretty collarettes are of fur, made in a sort of box plait or ripple effect, with a very full ruche of lace lining up and softening otherwise stiff outlines. These are quite inexpensive and becoming to the long, narrow faces and slim women generally.

The silk pillows of the season have not entered the miniature mania, and pillows of flowered brocade, with oval painting of powdered beauties, are new and very pretty.

FENCING IS NOW A POPULAR FAD IN SOCIETY.

Fencing is the fad this winter among English women of leisure, and consequently it is also the fad of young American girls. Experts in the art, some of them women, are engaged in the small gymnasiums, as well as privately, to teach the art to the members of the haut ton. Some of the pupils have shown themselves very apt scholars, being able to attack, parry and make every move of attack and defense with splendid precision. Fencing imparts a fine carriage and perfect control of the limbs, lissom, graceful attitudes, with great suppleness and quickness of movement. It not only brings into play nearly all the principal muscles of the body, but develops also the mental faculties. It involves the practice of quick decision, rapid judgment and good memory. If it be possible to make a dull or apathetic woman sharp, fencing will do it.

HINTS FOR THE HOUSEHOLD.

Young ladies are always so anxious to have recipes for making toilet waters that the following should prove acceptable: Take a quarter of an ounce of attar of roses and mix with a quart of strong spirits of wine. Put these into a close vessel, cork and shake it; then immerse the bottle in a deep basin full of hot water. When the vessel is warmed through, take it out of the water and shake vigorously until cold. Add a teaspoonful of calcined magnesia, shake again and filter lastly through close muslin. A few drops of this in a basin of water makes a pleasant washing fluid.

Two tablespoonfuls tapioca soaked overnight in half a cupful of water. Add half a cupful of cold water in the morning, the peeled rind of a lemon and boil until clear. Then take out the rind, add the juice of the lemon, a teaspoonful of lemon extract, half a cupful each of sugar and boiling water, a pinch of salt and boil. Mold and serve with sugar and cream.

Every day let the mattress be aired from an open window. Turn the mattress daily in order that it may not become lumpy and stiffy from being in one position all the time.

Whatever kind of a mattress you have give it frequent airings. Once in a month at least have it taken to the yard or to the roof and there let it be blown through by the wind and beaten soon by the sun until it is thoroughly freshened.

Many careful housekeepers are insisting that the water used for drinking purposes should be boiled during the autumn, when fevers are prevalent. If the water is boiled daily and regularly, it is very little trouble. There are few cases of typhoid fever and hundred diseases among the Chinese, although their water supply is very bad. The common drink in China is an infusion of tea made with boiling water.

Feather beds have been proved to be dangerous to health. They have frequently been the means of communicating contagious disease. The feathers seem peculiarly adapted to holding the impurities cast off by the body through the pores.

"The way to a man's heart is through his pillow" is the modern maiden's version of the French epigram, and the college men benefit thereby.

The bedding should be aired for an hour every day.