

"What can I say? What can I do?" cried Evelyn, stricken to the heart. Her tone unfortunately reached Mrs. Lancaster, who, starting up to show she had not been dozing, came with slow, panting steps to the two girls.

"Crying, Dottie? Why, what's wrong, my dear?"

"Evelyn has refused Algy," wailed Dottie, too miserable to think of tact or concealment. "Oh, what shall we do?"

"Refused our Algy!" cried the mother, when the idea had penetrated her somewhat lethargic brain. "Nonsense, my dear; you don't know what you are talking about."

This was all much worse than anything Evelyn had imagined; and yet she might have expected it, for Algy was the very apple of his mother's eye, the idol of his sister. In many a cosy talk together during the last few weeks the two women had planned how the home should be made comfortable and beautiful for Algy and his bride. No expectation of Evelyn's refusal had ever entered into either of their heads; for was she not very fond of him? and what woman to

whom Algernon Lancaster should throw his handkerchief would fail to pick it up?

But Dottie wept on, and Evelyn sat mute and tearless.

"If what you say is true," said Mrs. Lancaster, at last, turning redder than ever in the excitement, "Evelyn is a very unkind and ungrateful girl; but I don't believe it; there is some mistake. It couldn't be; why, they have always been so fond of one another!"

"Yes, and that is one reason," cried poor Evelyn. "He never thought of it—no more did I—till within the last six weeks. Why cannot we go back to what used to be? We were just like brother and sister!"

"I used to think of it," retorted Mrs. Lancaster; "but I didn't see that Algy's fancy went that way, so, as we can't control these things, I said nothing about it. But now that his heart is set on it, poor, dear lad—to think that my sister's own child should be the one to disappoint us all!"

The subject of these agitating remarks caught the sound of his mother's

last words, uttered under considerable excitement and in a heightened tone. He rose and strolled up to them. Evelyn thought he looked smaller than ever in his dejection, and felt intensely sorry for him.

"Don't trouble your heads about me," he said, easily guessing the purport of the conversation from the condition of all three women; "I shall take the evening train up to town. I shall go to an hotel."

"Oh, Algy, darling! if you must go, they will have everything ready so nicely for you at The Elms. I will telegraph to Mrs. Grainger."

"I don't want to go to The Elms. I don't suppose I shall go back there," retorted Algy, careless of the unspeakable dismay this suggestion caused to his mother. He turned on his heel and walked away.

"Poor, dear boy!" cried Mrs. Lancaster, bursting into tears. "See what you have done, Evelyn! You have broken up our home!"

(To be continued.)

CRYING FOR THE MOON.

A WORD TO OUR GIRLS.

By A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN.



ANY grown-up people," says Fredrika Bremer, the popular Swedish novelist, "resemble the child who wept because it could not have the moon." I do not know that girls are worse offenders in this re-

spect than other people—probably not; but it has often occurred to me that the happiness of life would be greatly increased, and that sort of dull dissatisfaction—shall we say discontent?—which hangs like a cloud over the lives of many young people, might be considerably lessened if only they would leave off "crying for the moon." A system of compensation enters very largely into the providential ordering of human affairs. Anyone who casts an observing eye around must notice that the poorest, and apparently most unhappily situated, have always some redeeming feature in their lot; while the most prosperous have some drawback, some speck upon their "wide heaven of blue," which, if small in others' eyes, often blots out all the sunshine for them. Even the few people who have absolutely no troubles as far as their friends can see, generally possess a marvellous faculty for inventing them, for their own express benefit. A fog, a wet day, a failure in matching a ribbon, an unbecoming bonnet, or an ill-cooked dinner is enough to depress their spirits for at least four-and-twenty hours. On the other hand, we may see a lonely man or woman struggling with poverty, weakness, or advancing age, with apparently nothing to cheer and everything to sadden, endowed with a buoyant spirit (truly the "merry heart" which "doeth good like a medicine"), and manifestly enjoying life in spite of all its sorrows. I am

not now referring to the spiritual joy and peace which our Lord and Saviour bestows upon those of His children who walk closely with Him, and thus are enabled to rise above the trials of their earthly life, but to a certain natural disposition which looks always on the bright side of things, and manages to extract amusement out of the gloomiest predicaments. No doubt, on the whole, this system of compensation, as I have called it for want of a better term, lightens the load of life amazingly to travellers on earth's pathways, but on the other hand it excludes the hope of perfect satisfaction or happiness in any lot. This idea youth is slow to grasp. A girl has a notion that she has a right to be happy, provided she is not doing wrong, and too often she expects to find bliss rather in her surroundings and circumstances than in herself. She has no idea of saying or feeling—

"My mind to me a kingdom is."

She wants a much wider realm. If she is disappointed in one scheme or person, she looks out for another, and no matter how often she finds flaws in her eagerly-pursued pleasures, she begins her search again in some other direction.

If girls would make up their minds to the fact that they cannot have everything, and decide what they wish for most, allowing for the necessary unpleasantnesses and deficiencies which must attend their choice, remembering that were these smoothed away the advantages they prize must inevitably vanish with them, there would be more gaiety and less grumbling in many a home. A few examples will make my meaning clear.

A young woman I once knew lived in London. She was passionately fond of scenery, of flowers, of sunsets and moonlight, autumn tints and spring perfumes. It was a positive delight to her to wander alone through lanes bordered with hedges covered with pink and white may, or wild roses and

honeysuckle. She loved to sit for hours in a primrose-carpeted wood, dreamily gazing up through the gently-swaying branches to the far-away blue sky, or watching the flickering sunlight and shifting shadows on the turf at her feet. She felt "a joy akin to rapture" when she stood on the summit of some English hill or Swiss mountain, and let her eyes wander untiringly over the wonderful panorama spread before her. She seemed to realise something of the glories of immortality and eternity, petty everyday annoyances sank into insignificance. She felt poetry if she could not give it utterance. Yet the major part of her existence was passed in a London square, with bricks and mortar all around. Street cries and the rumble of cabs and omnibuses were familiar to her ear, in place of the song of the birds in spring, the mysterious delicious hum of insects in the summer air, and the solemn, almost awe-inspiring silence of the woods and fields in winter.

Very often did this girl pity herself for being condemned to the smoke and noise and ugliness of London life, and vaguely envy the happy dweller amidst rural scenes and sounds. Suddenly one day a friend asked her, "Would you really like to go away from London and live in the country?" And when she seriously considered the question for the first time in her life, she found that to leave all her relations, her friends, the London libraries, and London conveniences generally, to face the sameness and solitude and wintry severity of a country life, was much more than she felt disposed to do. She had been crying for the moon, in fact; she wanted the poetry and sweetness of the country, as well as the stir and variety and mental advantages of the town.

It is not uncommon for a reserved person who rarely reposes confidence in others, and carefully shuts up all her best and most precious feelings in her own bosom, who takes the greatest pains to conceal her grief and

joy alike from outsiders, contriving to appear merry when her heart aches, and assuming careless indifference when it bounds within her, or who masks all her emotions alike by a well-bred, graceful calm, to complain of want of sympathy in her friends. She feels lonely, no one seems to care very much for her, or to enter into her inner life. "Of course not! How can they? What opportunity does she give them? How can they tell that her head aches, that she has had a bad night, or received a letter with sad news, or that a hope cherished for years has just crumbled into ruins, or that some dreaded future trial has grown to-day appreciably nearer? Her manner is just the same as usual, or perhaps a little irritable, or cynical, or provoking. No doubt a discriminating judge of character, a lover, or a mother might discover that something was wrong, but the majority of our friends are not discriminating judges of character, and, it is needless to add, are neither our lovers nor our mothers. Frank, open natures, who tell everybody everything, shed torrents of tears on any melancholy occasion, and are never ashamed of showing red eyes, or of betraying their delight when anything pleasant occurs to them, meet with plenty of sympathy. It is hard sometimes for a quiet, self-contained person to witness the affection and compassion poured out upon some frivolous creature who neither understands nor values them, whose tears are dried as soon as shed, and whose deepest griefs are forgotten within a fortnight, while she herself may break her heart in secret and silence, and no one will ever know or care. Whose fault is it? How can people care for what they know nothing about? And how are they to know if you take every precaution to hide it from them? Tell your troubles to others, show your suffering, and you will have kindness and sympathy in abundance. But that is just what the reserved and proud nature cannot do. The deeper the hurt the more carefully it is hidden. Like the wounded animal who seeks solitude to die, the stricken heart shrinks into itself. To expose its grief seems profanation, the tenderest touch gives pain, till time has healed the surface. Persons of this kind would not wear their heart upon their sleeve even if they could; they pride themselves upon their reticence as the mark of a superior nature. Be it so, we do not say it is not, but in that case they must be content to be often misunderstood, and to bear the lifelong loneliness which such a disposition inevitably entails. In short, they must not "cry for the moon."

Girls should cultivate a habit of looking on all sides when they have a choice to make, in the all-important matter of marriage especially. In these days, I believe, it is by no means uncommon for an intelligent young woman to make up her mind that single life is preferable to the suffering, care, and limitation of liberty necessarily imposed by the marriage vow. While she is young and bright, especially if she has a comfortable home and resources in herself, she sees no reason to regret her decision. She compares her leisure, health, and freedom from anxiety with her married sister's chequered career, and rejoices in her own superior advantages. But years roll on, death thins the ranks of her relatives, her dearest friends drop away, or, immersed in their own home interests, leave her, quite unintentionally, out in the cold. She grows plainer and more uninteresting to mere acquaintances. She finds she is less in request than formerly at festive gatherings, her circle contracts just when she begins to feel the need for its expansion. Her married friends all have a position in the world of their own, no one troubles about *their* advancing age and loss of youthful sprightliness; but she seems somehow outside of everything.

She looks forward to an old age of loneliness and ever-increasing gloom, and bitterly regrets that she "missed her chance" in youth.

But she forgets that while her sister was slaving in the kitchen because the cook had to be dismissed at a moment's warning, or was kept awake night after night by a fractious baby, or obliged to sacrifice all her own little fancies and pleasures to gratify an overbearing husband, she was free as air, always able to visit or travel, practise or read, walk or drive, as the whim took her, or occasion offered. Her eye was not dimmed prematurely by watching, or her health undermined by the duties of a wife and mother. She never wished to change with her sister then.

It is impossible to enjoy a husband's protection without performing a wife's duty; the love of children must be earned by a mother's devotion. The position and dignity accorded to the matron in society can only be secured by the sacrifice of maiden privileges. Many a lonely young wife in her new establishment finds the long day dreary in her husband's absence, and pines for her father's cheerful home. Worse still, she is perhaps disappointed in the man she has chosen; she compares his selfish absorption in his own affairs with her mother's thoughtful watch over her health and tender interest in all her hopes and fears. Later on she is sometimes tempted to feel as though the pleasures of youth, of intellect, and culture were all slipping past her, as she remains anchored in her nursery or school-room. She gets a letter from her sister at Rome or Naples, and sighs a little sadly as she reflects how improbable it is that she shall ever see the Coliseum, or bend over the blue depths of the far-famed bay. When she urges her husband to accept the invitation to Norway or "the moors," she conceals from him the keen little pain she feels as she sits down to refuse her mother's pressing request to "come home" for a fortnight, or her old schoolfellow's urgent entreaty to visit her in her new house, "because they cannot both be away"; and "Fred's excursion must cost so much," she reflects. Yet she would be inconsolable if "Fred" passed out of her life, and she knows well that she would not part with one of the little curly heads around the nursery table for all the Continental trips in the world. Both matron and maid are tempted to "cry for the moon."

Husbands and wives are too often given to the same practice on other grounds. For instance, a middle-aged man, with all his habits and crotchets firmly rooted and grown into second nature, marries a lively, frivolous girl about half his age. He discovers before long that their tastes differ in almost every particular. He prefers quiet, she likes a cheerful bustle; he enjoys long *tête-à-tête* evenings, she wants society; he clings to a hundred little eccentric ways which have crept into his life in chambers, she desires above all things to be like other people; he is old-fashioned by choice and intention, she always aspires to know and to possess "the last new thing." The husband feels that unless he is to become a selfish tyrant and spoil his wife's life, he must in many respects remodel his own. If he is just and loves the girl, he does it more or less cheerfully, but still he has a sore feeling, as if somehow things ought not to have turned out so. He wants his life brightened by the pretty, gay young bride, but at the same time desires to retain his bachelor independence.

On the other hand, a graceful, ladylike girl, well-born and well-bred, but portionless, timidly dreading to face the world, and fearful of becoming an "old maid," marries a man her inferior in everything but fortune. She is sentimental, he is a busy City man, with his mind, if not his affections, centred in the Stock Exchange. She wants him to read Tennyson to her, he feels it hard that she

minds his taking a nap after dinner. She groans over the fate which compels her to endure his brother's vulgar jokes and still more vulgar compliments, and the tedious talk about the price of butter and the inefficiency of cooks, which her sister-in-law dignifies by the title of conversation. He thinks it vexatious that his wife should "give herself airs" with his family. She mourns over his want of polish, and the absence of the little courtesies that a husband in her own rank of life would have paid her. He, poor man, thinks her unreasonable if still dissatisfied, when she has a fine house in Belgravia, a seat that a nobleman might be proud of in the country, and *carte blanche* to lavish what she likes on servants, equipage, and dress.

Again, a man of refined taste and good position makes a *mésalliance*. He marries a girl of low birth, vulgar manners, and uncultured mind. When the glamour which his passion threw over her passes away, he sees her deficiencies almost as plainly as his friends saw them all the time, and whenever she mortifies him by a breach of the unwritten laws of society, feels wronged and unkindly used. The fault is his own more than hers; he knew perfectly well, or might have known, that she must be ignorant of almost everything that to women in her rank of life would come as a matter of course. He could not be content without bringing her individual fascination and beauty into his life, and he has no right to complain because with it he has to take her folly and vulgarity. The girl, on her part, feels it is cruel that when she is honestly doing her best, her husband still finds fault with her for what appears to her no reason at all, and is disposed to forget what she owes to the man who has raised her from want and obscurity. Both these couples are to be pitied, for both are "crying for the moon," which assuredly they will never succeed in obtaining.

It would be an advantage to many young people, girls more especially, to get firmly fixed in their minds the conviction that the importance of a busy life cannot be combined with the ease of an indolent one, except in very rare and exceptional circumstances. In the nineteenth century, ripe fruit does not drop into one's mouth unsought. Nevertheless, young women who avoid responsibility, shun work, and are loath to take any extra trouble, or exert themselves unnecessarily on any occasion; who faint or go into hysterics at any painful or alarming crisis, and make it their object to slip through life as comfortably and easily as possible, often feel aggrieved that their sister or friend is a power in the family, a personage in the parish, and meets everywhere with more consideration and respect than themselves. What wonder! If the mother is ill or absent, one daughter is able and willing to take the reins; she can manage the servants, order the dinner, superintend the marketing, and keep the accounts so well that even her elders admire her capacity. The other will do her best, if necessary, but is always thankful to be left to her own pursuits, and relinquish the task to her abler sister. In the parish it is the same—the one is always ready at an emergency; she can take the organ when the organist breaks down, get up a concert or parish tea, act as local secretary for the C. M. S., or superintend the Sunday-school, if desired. It is hard to say what she cannot do at a push. She is not too self-conscious or shy to pray by a sick woman's bedside; she wins the heart of the toddling darlings who are afraid of other strangers. She can always give the Rector the parochial information he wants at the district meeting, and nobody is a better hand at a school-treat. The other has her own district and her own class, but would not for the world undertake a single duty beyond, and has secret fears that she by

no means comes up to the mark in her management of them. Of course the first fills a larger place in the local estimation.

Among her friends one girl will be always available, sparkling in conversation, ready at playing accompaniments, well versed in the latest news and fashions, and quick to catch and impart a new sort of table decoration or amusing game. Blessed with an excellent memory for facts and faces, she never fails to recognise an acquaintance, inquire after a cold, or execute a commission. Her taste and adroitness are at the service of the first of her friends who tries to secure them. She always seems fresh and cheerful, and if tired or disappointed, successfully hides all appearance of it.

Her sister, on the contrary, though pleasant enough in her way, can neither sing nor play, never will execute a commission if she can possibly avoid it, has a wretched memory, is soon tired, and shows it plainly in her face and manner. If she takes a fancy to anyone, she will exert herself to please; but otherwise she does not care to take the trouble to be anything more than ordinarily polite. She seldom notices improvements or novelties, and if she did would certainly not think it worth her while to use labour and time in reproducing them. It is no use to seek news from her; she smilingly confesses "she knows nothing about her neighbours," and rather prides herself on not being a gossip. She finds her own affairs quite troublesome enough, without burdening herself with other people's. Is it very surprising that one sister is more in request than the other, and takes the first place in their social circle? The second girl does not like it; she wishes to keep her tranquil leisure, and remain in her chosen groove, but at the same time share the popularity and distinction of the energetic and hardworked sister. She cries quietly, but persistently, for the moon.

In beginning life it is well to find out what can be done in our circumstances, and what cannot. If a girl with a small dress allowance sets her heart on perfectly-fitting gowns

and Parisian hats, she is hoping for impossibilities, unless, indeed, she is clever enough to make the gowns and copy the hats herself.

A young couple who have barely enough to make both ends meet in the rank of life in which their lot is cast, cannot give stylish dinner parties with champagne and ices, or indulge in expensive continental tours, though they may have been in the habit of taking such things as matters of course before they married. Young women of delicate health or weak constitution cannot with impunity venture on long walking expeditions which their stronger friends find invigorating and delightful. Neither can they devote themselves to tennis or skating with the ardour and perseverance necessary perhaps to win distinction in their set. Many a foolish girl runs all risks, disregards all warnings, and refuses even to listen to the promptings of her own secret inclinations, for fear of finding herself stranded and left behind in the rush of life around her. Her young friends may praise her "spirit" and "pluck," but she will heartily regret her imprudence in after years; if, indeed, she does not bury all her hopes and schemes in a premature grave.

It is useless to expect to find opposite qualities in the same person. Some girls, though far enough from perfection themselves, seem to imagine that every acquaintance ought to be an embodiment of every conceivable virtue and attraction. The polished *dilettanti* gentleman who never has anything to do but to make himself agreeable and "kill time" may be a very suitable person to criticise a dado, guide a party through an art exhibition, or make a social entertainment go off brilliantly, but you have no right to be disappointed if you find him a broken reed when you lean on him in some grave and all-important crisis. On the other hand, you must not be annoyed if the hardworked man, whose brain has been taxed all day in the law courts or the city, the study or the parish, fails to take a very lively interest in your high art needlework, your local news, or your little social plans or triumphs. He will do his best if he wishes to please, but he is

not improbably a far less amusing companion than the one whose chief interests in daily life are as trivial as your own. Let, however, some great trial overshadow you, some perplexing difficulty require solution, on the outcome of which your whole future may depend, and you may find in the worker who was deficient in small talk, and made no mark in society, a friend and counsellor of inestimable value.

In conclusion, let me warn you against a common and crying evil of the present day. Do not try to combine the service of God and Mammon. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." If you desire to experience the joy of that peace "which passeth all understanding," you must not select for your friends and intimate associates those who hinder rather than help you to walk with God, however well chosen they may be with a view to social success. If you want strength to resist temptation, and wisdom to "walk circumspectly" amidst the snares of the evil one, you must find time for prayer, even though to secure it you have to sacrifice pleasant society, opportunities of improving your mind, or what you deem needful rest. You must not do what you conscientiously believe to be wrong in little things, to please those you love best, or those with whom you most desire to stand well, on the plea that "better people than you do it, and it makes life so much smoother and easier not to fuss about trifles." In a word, you must strive to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," at all times and in all places. I do not promise that you will never suffer earthly loss in consequence of your choice. The revered Archbishop Sumner used to say, "A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing," but "the fashion of this world passeth away," and a day will surely come to each one of us when earth's best treasures will appear, viewed in the light of eternity, as dust in the balance compared with the unclouded faith and joyful hope which will bear us safely through the grave and gate of death, and make us "partakers of everlasting glory in the life to come."



GOOD HUMOUR.

"—pleasantry will oft cut through
Hard knots that gravity could scarce undo."
Horace.

THE WEIGHT OF THE GOOSE.

If a goose weighs ten pounds, and half its own weight, what is the weight of the goose?

Many are tempted to reply on the instant fifteen pounds, but the correct answer is, of course, twenty pounds.

THE RIGHT WORD IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

We hear of some barometers being set higher than others, so that while one may be pointing at "rain," another is at "much rain." So in different families we find language pitched in a higher key than others. Exaggeration runs in families.

I know of one circle where everybody talks about and describes things in a style most painful in its want of a sense of proportion. "Hateful," "shameful," "disgusting," "horrid," "never," "ever," are words which recur with distressing frequency about events which in a household where the graces of speech were cultivated would be described as "unpleasant," "regrettable," "distasteful," "hardly," or "scarcely." In fact, the meaning is the same in both instances, only the barometer is set in the one case higher than in the other.

How much may depend on the right word being spoken at the right time, in the proper tone, by the proper person! War or peace, life or death, heaven or hell, may hang upon a single word. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in baskets of silver."—*Spurgeon*.

CHANGED TIMES.

An old farmer, who lived on the borders of Hampshire, once observed when talking about the corruption and degeneracy of the times, that it was the fine words and the flattery of men to the farmers' wives that had done all the mischief.

"For," said he, "when it was dame and porridge 'twas real good times; when 'twas mistress and broth 'twas worse a good deal; but when it came to be ma'am and soup 'twas very bad."

HOW THE CAT RANG FOR DINNER.

In a monastery in France a cat was kept that never used to receive any victuals till the bell rang to announce to the monks the hour of meals. She never failed then to be wittin hearing.

One day, however, she happened to be shut up in a solitary apartment, and the bell rang in vain so far as regarded her. Some hours afterwards she was liberated from her confinement, and ran half famished to the place where a plate of victuals used generally to be set for her, but she found none this time. In the afternoon the bell was heard ringing at an unusual hour, and when the people of the monastery came to see what was the matter, there they found the cat hanging upon the bell-rope and setting it in motion as well as she could in order that she might have her dinner served up to her.