

Of Interest to Women.

PHARISEES.

This shall be an article for young people, since the old ones are generally past curing. "It's hard to teach old dogs new tricks," says the proverb; and it certainly is hard to do anything at all with an old habit—particularly a habit of mind. Still there's another proverbial wisdom which says that "it's never too late to mend," so the inveterates need not lose heart. All that's needed is an open mind at first and after that determination and perseverance, "again and always" perseverance.

What I want to write about is the common enemy of all mankind, self-satisfaction. This vice is not what it calls itself; it is not properly self-satisfaction, it is satisfaction with the delusion that we think is self, built upon the foundation of an inability "to see ourselves as others see us." Ninety-nine out of every hundred people have no self-criticism. They do not recognise their own virtues sometimes; very often they have no idea of their faults. The most sour and surly think they are quite popular with their fellows; and if anything goes wrong, it's the other man's fault. "He has a disagreeable manner." The stupidest think themselves oracles of wisdom, and the selfish wonder why others treat them unkindly.

In part, this self-satisfaction or rather self-ignorance, is a natural protection; a kind of skin for the soul to enable it to contact the outside world without too much pain. There is no gift at once more grievous and more precious than to be "thin-skinned" in this peculiar way. To have a high ideal of beauty or of work, or of character and to know how far short of our ideal is the interpretation we place before the world, is to have pain for a heritage; but it is a growing pain, for on the other hand, unless we know that we all short, how shall we try to improve?

The people who really worry us, however, are the hopelessly thick-skinned, the pachyderms of the moral world. They are never in the wrong; they cannot do anything wrong; they cannot even hear the idea that someone might think they had made a mistake. If other people do things differently, then other people do things wrongly; they, the pachyderms, are always right. They will take pains to show you how right they are, even when you haven't been thinking anything, right or wrong, about the matter. I remember one woman who went to a picnic with us and attended at the boiling of the billy. Some of the girls put the tea in before the water was more than warm; and she had to explain several times and to several people that she had had no art or part in the making of that tea. The pachyderm can do no wrong.

These people, even those who are not extreme cases, are so satisfied with their own way of living and thinking and doing that they imagine everyone else ought or must be longing to change places with them. Are they religious? Then their way of thinking is the only vessel of truth, the only glimpse of salvation for mankind. Are they doctors? Then no one who practises any method of healing other than their method of healing, can be other than a quack or a charlatan. Are they married, especially are they married women? Then all single persons must be secretly eating out their hearts with envy and unsatisfied desire of married bliss. Are the orthodox flesh-eaters? Then all vegetarians are cranks and sentimental fools.

We are all somewhat tarred with this tick.

"The trail of the serpent is over us all." But there is some hope for those who have become conscious of the fact; who have realised at any rate that "one man's meat is another man's poison, and that what is good to them may not look good to someone else.

The Jewish Pharisee who "thanked God that he was not as other men were," has become the typical case for this disease, but we all have a touch of it. The Sadducees were just as bad in their own way, and the modern young woman is often as bad as any of them. He is fond of good things to eat, and nice things to wear, and has perhaps a pretty discernment in both. She has found or confidently expects to find, a husband, one who will make her as comfortable as she has been accustomed to be; and she is satisfied that hers is the ideal life, and hers the last word in what should be.

She has no notion that another woman whose lot is different, involving perhaps a battle single-handed with the world, is probably acquiring virtues and merits of which she never dreamed; preparing for a richer harvest in truer and more permanent achievement. It would be well when we compare ourselves with others, to ask ourselves two questions, and answer them to the best of our honesty:—

1.—How would we be in other people's circumstances?

2.—How would they be in ours?

Could we do their work in life as well as they could do ours? Nothing else much matters. We are too much inclined to think ourselves superior, not on strength of what we are, or what we can do, as on that of what we have—especially in the way of food and furniture.

The worst fruit of the Pharisee spirit is intolerance. What we think and do is right, and others must be made to think and do likewise. What fires have been lighted, what rivers of blood have been shed to quench them, because of this grand mistake. When we have learned that there are as many roads to Heaven as there are people travelling thither, then we shall have learned one of those great simple truths that are yet "a master light of all our seeing."

Children's Column.

MATER'S LETTER BOX.

Mater invites children to send in stories for this column, or correspondence which will be replied to through these columns. All matter to be clearly written in ink, and on one side of the paper only. Name, age, and address, must be always given, and correspondence directed to "Mater," care of Editor, "The Digger," Box 310, Invercargill.

THE ADVENTURES OF TED AND SALLIE.

(By "Teddy," North Invercargill.)

Once there was a little girl named Madie who had many beautiful toys. Among them there was a teddy-bear, and a black doll named Sallie. Sorry to say Madie was an untidy girl and left her toys anywhere. Now it happened one day when she was out playing, she had left them on the floor on her play-room. Teddy was fond of hunting mice—the reason of which I do not know, and Sallie was rather inquisitive. He was close to Sallie so he said: "Say, Sal, what about going mice-hunting." Sallie consented to this because one had bitten a hole in her dress and she wanted to hunt it very much. They went out of that room, up the passage, till they came to another door standing ajar. They opened it a little further and with a glad laugh ran into the room. On the floor stood a box. Sallie and Teddy wanted very much to know what was in it, so Sallie said: "Sit on the lid, Ted, while I move this thing about. It might open that way." Ted sat on the lid and Sallie began to move the catch. "Jump off quick!" shouted Sallie, "I have opened the box."

It was too late. Teddy went flying into the air through the window which was open, splash into a tank of water. Luckily a painter was painting the house and rescued poor Teddy from what might have been a watery grave. He took him to Madie who was playing in the garden, and when she saw him wouldn't believe it. She ran straight into the room where she had left them, but nothing but her best doll was there. Then she ran up the passage into Bobbie's room where she found Sallie sitting on the floor nearly frightened to death with the Jack-in-the-box staring at her. Teddy was none the worse for his dipping either. He was put by the fire and promised never to go mice-hunting again.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.

I'm sure you've heard of Polly, dear, so I will finish her tale here. Yes, Flinders was her name. You've heard of how she warmed her feet beside the cinders, poor wee sweet, and how a whipping came!

But listen, I can tell you more. You will be glad to hear, I'm sure how Polly, one cold day, instead of whippings got a treat, with fairy-food to drink and eat—a fairy holiday.

She lived, you know, with an old dame—old witch-wife Grumble was her name. She'd carried little Polly to her own home when Polly was wee and just as pretty as could be—and tiny as a doll!

So Polly didn't understand that her real home was Fairyland and "Ma!" she called the Dame, and worked for her, and worked and worked; and never idled, never shirked, but always was the same.

Indeed she had a cruel life, for how cross was the old witch-wife—how hard and long she beat. Cold water was Polly's only drink—and not too much of that, I think—and only bread to eat.

Old Grumble had a Magic Cat, who hissed and bit and scratched and spat, and seemed uncommon wild; but it loved Polly dearly, though the old Witch Grumble didn't know, and thought Puss loathed the child!

You see, kind Polly'd fed that Cat with scraps of cheese and lumps of fat from the old Witch's meals. "Poor Puss," she'd say. "You're fierce, I know, but hungry folk are often so, I know how hunger feels."

And so the Cat loved Polly, yes, though bad old Grumble didn't guess they were great friends, those two. And while the Witch went working tricks abroad, they'd light a fire of sticks, and warm their poor bones through.

"Oh, Puss," sobbed Poll, "I feel so low. I've eaten nothing, as you know, since yesterday at tea. And then it was not much because old Grumble grabbed all there was! Oh, I am shivery!"

"Poll," said the Cat, "I've got a plan. I love you, Polly, and I can do something dear, for you. For years I've been a Witch's Cat who only hissed and scratched and spat, but—that's no longer true!"

"I served a Master long ago, who loved me, Polly, you must know (Dick Whittington, was he). In those days no one saw me frown. I lived with him in London Town—oh, very happily."

"But, oh, one day a dreadful trick was played me a Witch's stick. I was enchanted, dear, and whisked away by Grumble—yes, I'm sure that nobody could guess, but that's how I came here!"

"And here I've stayed, and hissed and spat, and acted like a hateful Cat until you came. But then, you were so kind to me, and so you've un-enchanted me, you know. I'm a good Cat again!"

"So wait, I'll send sparks if you wait from my thick coat, and in the grate we'll have a fire gay; and you shall crouch down and be warm—that surely can't be any harm—while Grumble is away!"

So down they sat, the happy pair, and oh, they felt so cheery there, in the bright fire-lit room; till, of a sudden, what a fright they got, as in from the black night rode Grumble on her broom.

"Oh, dearie me," she shrieked and raved: "How dare you burn the sticks I've saved to cook my supper-bread!" She seized poor Polly from the floor and pushed her through the oven-door: "I'll eat you," Grumble said.

And then she turned her to the Cat. "Now guard the door, be sure of that!" she cried with evil grin. "I'm going out to find more wood, and there will be a fire as good as soon I come in!"

She grinned still more as off she flew, for oh, of course, she little knew that Puss and Poll were friends. She would have stared if she had stayed, to hear Puss comfort the wee maid, and try to make amends.

"Oh, Poll, I cannot let you out—my claws are weak, the door's too stout!" so kindly Puss cried. "But listen, darling, unto me—the fire's not yet hot, you see, and Grumble's still outside. But, oh, she's getting fuel, dear; she'll heap the fire up, I fear, and you'll be roasted—yes. So listen, Polly, unto me—I'll tell you of a mystery that you could never guess!"

"Creep down into the oven's end, and you will find (I don't pretend) a wee, wee fairy-door. Creep through that, and you'll find outside a Magic Country stretching wide, and Fairy-folk galore!"

So that's the story's ending, then when Grumblekins came back again with stacks and stacks of wood to cook poor Polly into pies—what was her wonder and surprise to find it was no good!

The oven was an empty place—there was of Polly not a trace; for she was gone—oh, yes! And bad old Grumble to this day keeps wonder—wondering away—she simply cannot guess!

But Puss, sitting very still, knows all the story, and she will just sometimes give a purr and mew, "I hope Poll's glad and gay and having a nice holiday! Oh, I was fond of her!"

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Children's Column, and hopes to hear from you again.

(By "Vera.")

There was a cabbage tree growing on a hill in Canterbury. It was a very proud tree and thought it was the only beautiful tree growing there. Some children who lived near it, often played under it, and they called it their "beautiful cabbage tree." One day the children brought a professor to see their cabbage tree. When he saw it he said, "You do not know the name of that tree, do you?" and they said, "Yes, we do, it is the cabbage tree." But the man said, "Oh, no, the name of that tree is the Palm Lily," but the children still called it the cabbage tree.

When they went away, the tree thought to itself, "This is no place for me amongst these old swamps and shrubs." She was saying to herself, "This is no place for me, I should be over in Central America with all the other big palms." Just then the Queen of the Night came past and asked what was the matter, and the cabbage tree said: "It is not fair that I should be here." Then all at once everything changed and she was in a hot-house with all the lovely palms and flowers out in bloom, and some she did not know the names of. But she did not like there at all, because it was too hot for her, and all her leaves spread out and became quite sticky with the heat, and they were sticking to her head and to all her lovely yellow flowers that she had for her crown.

Just then a pert little girl came in with her mother. She was admiring all the lovely palms and flowers, then she said: "Look at that ugly old tree. I wonder who brought it here."

The poor tree was wishing it was back again with the other bushes that she once thought ugly.

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