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THE HAPPY HOME;

—OR— The Husband's Triumph.

BY MRS. A. J. DUNNWAY.

AUTHOR OF "JACOB REED," "ELLEN POWERS," "MARRIAGE AND HENRY LEE," ETC., ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

A quaint, rambling and unfinished stone dwelling stood upon a sloping eminence, overlooking a fertile valley that was barricaded in places by rocks of gray sandstone and brownish-gray basalt, and in others by lofty hills, barren of trees, except at intervals, where stunted pines dared to protrude their feathery tips into the empty air, only to get their branches turned the wrong way by the prevailing summer gales that had long ago laid bare the scaly sides of the ambitious evergreens and caused them to grow knotty and gnarled and prematurely old.

The house stood at least a mile from its nearest neighbor, the way to this neighbor's being across a deep, rocky gulch, through which a little river flowed that sometimes took on great proportions that would shut off egress from the lonely home for weeks together.

Below the farm, and perhaps a mile distant, over a steep declivity, which could only be compassed by a circuitous route of more than two miles in length, lay a quiet, tasteful border town, with church spires pointing heavenward, where numerous white, vine-embowered cottages lay nestled among choice collections of fruit and floral beauty that always, when she saw them, awakened feelings of sadness closely akin to envy in the breast of Mrs. Armstrong, whose husband owned the great stone barns where she lived, around those no vestige of shade was permitted to grow, no flowering shrubs allowed to nestle.

Below the town, which had long borne the honors and expenses of a regularly incorporated city, and which, for our purposes, shall be designated Stonehenge, because we do not at this writing remember that any town with such a name is marked upon American geographical maps, ran a deep and rocky river, where navigation was possible by sections only, the different and unavailing rapids having long been overcome by portages, over which a mule railroad and great freight wagons transported the exports and imports of the vast but sparsely settled country to which the river was an outlet.

The homestead of the Armstrongs was slightly enough, the scenery around it being sufficiently picturesque, and the natural advantages more than necessary to make the place the most attractive resort in the vicinity of Stonehenge. Isaac Armstrong had pre-empted a large tract of government land in an early day, when there was no Congressional or other limit to such a purchase except the Pacific ocean, and no boundary to the purchaser's greed except the length of his purse.

He had married Sally, his present wife, when on a visit among his relatives in the East, whither he had repaired for consolation shortly after the death of Mrs. Armstrong the first.

That memorable visit had marked an era in his history, for it had made a great man of him during its continuance. He had plenty of money—as who from the far west had not—and he spent it lavishly, in ways that would have astonished Mrs. Armstrong number one, could she have witnessed such reckless scattering of her careful hoardings.

As Isaac Armstrong was the father of a dozen children, eight being girls, the relatives of Mrs. Armstrong number one, were of opinion that it was not at all necessary for him to look upon any other woman with a view to matrimony, but as is usual in such cases, Isaac Armstrong thought otherwise; and so did Sally Jones, a young and spoiled daughter of a widowed mother, who would have made a far more suitable companion for the sturdy farmer and stock man, had he but realized the fact.

But Isaac Armstrong, like any other widower in love, had neither sense nor caution. His dozen children were far away in their Pacific home; he was in good condition and owned a square league of land and the cattle upon a thousand hills; and it was not to be expected but he would marry, and marry well in the bargain.

So, when pretty Sally Jones became the second Mrs. Isaac Armstrong, nobody was astonished, though some uncharitable croakers did say with dubious shakes of the head, that there "was something unnatural in such a union," and then, "nobody knew what sort of a mess of young Armstrongs she'd have to deal with when she'd get among them; and she'd surely rue the day when she gave up her freedom for the doubtful advantages that seemed to accompany the unequal match."

But the nine days' gossip came to an end after the wedding. The visits came to an end also, and after a long and laborious journey, to the like of which the bride had hitherto been wholly unaccustomed, the bleak stone house was reached and the young mistress domiciled therein, at a time just five years prior to the evening upon which our story opens.

Mrs. Armstrong number two was now a faded, nervous, sickly, anxious woman, and, instead of being mistress as she expected, was most imperiously ruled by the three eldest daughters of Mrs. Armstrong number one.

"Mattie, won't you go and see what ails little Fred?" queried the step-mother, as she sat upon a rude bench in the corner, trying to hush the wallings of a teething infant. The poor child is badly hurt, I know. Do run—won't you?"

"No!" exclaimed Mattie, giving her shapely head a defiant toss. "Let everybody take care of their own young ones!"

"If I had acted upon that principle, I know a family of a dozen that would have been left in rather a bad condition. But do go and see about the child!"

"Plague take a step-mother and her young ones, too!" said the gracious young lady. "I'm looking for Mr. Harding every moment! Big as this barn of a house is, there isn't a furnished room in it! The young ones are squalling like mad; father and the boys will soon be in to supper; mother's laid up as usual, or pretends to be, and there's no comfort to be found anywhere. I mean to get married the very first chance I get, and then, good-bye to Stonehenge farm and all that pertains to it."

room boasted a great fire-place and the kitchen a mammoth range, but there was no furnished room in the great house for the reception of guests; so there was no alternative but to ask the stranger into the sitting-room and introduce him to her faded step-mother and the crying children.

Mr. Harding tried to appear at ease, but made a very unsuccessful attempt to do so. Indeed, the fact that Mattie's visitors were never welcome, seemed to have engrained itself upon the very atmosphere.

"Mat!" called a great boy from the kitchen, as he opened the door just wide enough to admit his nose and mouth, "father's coming and will want his supper! Come right out here now, and go to work!"

"Excuse me," said Mattie, looking troubled. "Mother, I am compelled to trespass a little upon your hospitality this evening. Will you be kind enough to entertain Mr. Harding till I return from the kitchen?"

"You're such a gracious girl and so kind to little Fred, that I feel under great obligation to entertain your company," was the curt reply.

"It's of no consequence, I assure you, Miss Armstrong," said Mr. Harding, bowing and turning very red in the face, while Mattie retreated to the kitchen with flashing eyes and indignant heart-throbs, muttering vengeance upon her step-mother, and rustling around among dishes and kettles in a manner highly suggestive of prospective accidents to crockery and food.

"Get out from under my feet, a dozen or twenty of you!" she exclaimed, as the younger boys of the first family of Armstrongs stood over the range, engaged in popping corn.

"Mat's on her high horse to-night, because she's got a beau!" exclaimed John, a lad of sixteen, as he applied the crash towel that hung on a roller behind the door to his bronzed face and hands, leaving the marks of his substantial rubbings upon the rough surface of the towel in a broad, dirty, half-wet patch, which was left to dry slowly for the agreeable use of the next applicant.

Mattie took no notice of the youngsters' taunt. Indeed, she knew him well enough to be aware that the only way to exhaust his ill-natured and yet playful resources in that line was by refusing to supply him with fuel upon which to feed them.

Supper was prepared in a reckless hurry. To Mattie's dismay, the step-mother, who had until lately accepted her lot in all meekness, but had suddenly turned, at last, like a persecuted worm, to wreak whatever of annoyance she might upon those who had long oppressed her, invited Mr. Harding out to supper without giving any sort of previous warning to Mattie.

The table-cloth was asked and dirty, the victuals half cooked and served in a disorderly manner; the children were ravenous and clamorous; Isaac Armstrong, the head of the family, was morose and sullen; Mattie was humiliated, and the supper was a failure.

"Not a very inviting prospect," soliloquized the visitor. "I see but little promise of happiness in seeking out materials to build a home from such a mass of crooked timber as I find here. But Miss Armstrong is superbly beautiful. She'd make a perfect queen of home, if she were only properly restrained and cultivated. But the query is, who'll dare to undertake the job?"

To bring order out of such a chaos of confusion as this family affords, would be missionary work for a regiment of men with more of the heavenly graces than I possess."

It was well for Mattie Armstrong's temper that she did not understand her visitor's soliloquy. She would have been very ungracious with him if she had.

The children—boys and girls alike—were excessively rude and noisy. Isaac Armstrong, who had been absent, as was his wont, for days together, negotiating bargains in blooded stock, had come home very unexpectedly, and the youngest boy of family number one was compelled to yield his seat at table which he did after much grumbling, taking his plate to the kitchen floor, where he reveled in gravy and molasses, until the floor, his face and person were alike besmeared with oily sweetness.

The head of the family grunted obedience to Mr. Harding, clucked to the baby, pitted Fred's fingers, kicked a dog because it ventured upon terms of too great familiarity from under the table, asked about the brindle cow that was ailing when he left, and the belled ewe that had recently had twin lambs, but he took no more notice of Mrs. Armstrong number two than if she had been an automaton.

Evidently Mrs. Armstrong was well broken, for she did not appear to notice the slight. Indeed, she was like the Irishman's famous horse, getting used to privation, and dying daily under the discipline.

"Would you not like to take a walk, Miss Armstrong?" queried her visitor, when the unsocial meal was finished. "The moonlight is beautiful, and I have a great desire to view the river and valley from yonder ridge by Lunar light."

"I should dearly love to go, sir, but the dishes are to wash and the cows to milk. It will be late before my work is done," was the sad and yet dignified reply.

"Let the little girls wash the dishes. John can milk," said the father with a touch of kindness in his manner, for which Mattie was wholly unprepared.

"The 'little girls' fall to appreciate the situation," retorted Margaret, a girl of twelve, who answered usually to the cognomen of "Peg."

A look from the father silenced further audible objections, and John took down the pails, banging them together furiously as he strode through the lawn, and administering kicks at random upon dogs and children alike.

"I pity the cows to-night," said Mattie, mentally, as she sought her room to arrange herself for the walk.

The room in question was, like all the rest of the house, large, bare and comfortless. A home-made bedstead with a scanty patch-work quilt; a little mirror that gave her features an oblong twist; a row of nails along the wall upon which were arrayed a number of cheap but rather pretty dresses; a broken chair and a wooden chest comprised the furniture.

Mattie Armstrong bathed her face and hands to reduce their ruddy hue, and taking down her long luxuriant hair, allowed it to float over her shoulders in a graceful abandon that was bewitchingly becoming. She next arrayed herself in a dress of light blue de-laune, very cheap, but very pretty in its trimmings of black velvet, and which fitted closely around her shapely throat, where a simple linen collar was fastened by a jet of primitive pattern and nominal cost.

Black kid gloves, a sailor hat and fleecy shawl, striped in blue and black, completed a costume of which many a well-bred city belle might be justly proud.

"I am ready," she said, accosting Amos Harding, as he stood in the doorway looking out upon the moon.

Common Sense Hints.

Not a few of the physical ills to which flesh is heir is the result of nothing to do, or, at least, are made worse thereby. It matters little what pain we have, if we are not conscious of it, if such an expression may be allowed. With bodies as full of sensations as are those of most us, there is plenty to give us uneasiness if we set down to think of them. Those with the best grace and most busy themselves about, have full time to note each ache and pain, and to cultivate it, no matter how young and tender, to a full-grown one. There are hosts of people who would feel very badly, but they only had time to think how they feel. As it is, they don't know that they have a headache or backache or any other kind of ache till they stop work. And people with little to do, are so much indignant at waiting so long for recognition, and leaves before it is recognized at all. It is a good thing to slight these unweelcome visitors, and it can be done by making a list of such ailments, and if these ills are courted and petted, they come to stay, and finally come to be constant and uncomfortable companions. No small share of the sickness of very young people, is due to the fact that they avoided altogether if they had some occupation demanding attention and effort. Besides having time to think about their symptoms, and this makes them worse, they are liable to influence of the mind over the body, they also have time to begin doctoring, which often is the worst thing that can be done.

It is a serious question whether more diseases are not created or aggravated by the doses of medicine that people pour down their throats than are cured or alleviated thereby. Physicians are more and more inclined to believe that they would be more useful if they had the courage to brave the displeasure of their patients by telling them they do not need medicines when such is the case.

How it may have been with Adam we do not pretend to say; neither will we theorize upon how it might have been with his descendants, if he and his wife had not taken forbidden fruit; but as it is, work saves the sons and daughters of this ancient pair from many ills that otherwise would suffer, and, while some are overworked and work to death, there are not a few who would be happier, more healthy, and live longer, if they had more to do. Charles Lamb once said, "The best thing a man can have to do is—nothing. Any next to that, it is to work, but not to work as if it were a year or two, he changed his tune and wrote, "Overwork is better than no work."

An Old Adage.

"Never cry for split milk," is an adage venerable for its age, and full of wisdom as applicable to a great many things. Your favorite dog has suddenly disappeared; your most valuable horse has fallen lame; the frost has nipped your corn and killed your early beans; the milch has ruined your wheat; and your eye does not fill with your new cow, that cost \$100, has kicked over the pail just as it was filled with warm, rich milk; don't cry for split milk—what's the use? It is necessary to your happiness to bear with patience and uncomplainingly the unavoidable and almost innumerable little ills which beset every human pathway.

The wisdom of the maxim which we have quoted, however, is incomplete unless it be coupled with the maxim, "Never laid down in connection with it, which is this: Don't spill your milk. If the milk be spilled through your fault, and you apply the maxim not to cry for split milk, is simply substitute for the people negligence with a foolish indifference.

When any evil or unhappiness befalls you, look calmly at the cause, and occasion of it, and see whether more caution on your part might not have avoided them; and if you find they might, then be more careful to shun the producing causes in the future.

It is not worth while to waste the precious moments of this short life in idle regrets. On the other hand, it is not well to go on repeating the follies from which one has already suffered, or renewing indiscretions which are sure to bring renewed penalties.

PHYSICAL DEGENERACY OF WOMAN.—On this subject Mrs. Burdette very pertinently remarks: "To that class of persons who are fond of drawing comparisons between women of the present and those of the past, I would suggest the builders of the pyramids, and the builders of the pyramids, as a capital cause of the difference. Endowed with robust constitutions, trained in the school of hard work, they seemed to have fancied their strength inexhaustible, and in the manifold labors imposed by the house-keeping of fifty years ago, to have thought little of the physical endowment of their children. How they talked, early and late, of strong, armed women, spinning, weaving, cooking, washing, making butter and cheese, filling the house, from cellar to attic, with the evidences of their handwork. Neither of the builders do one of their kind, the work that I could do at their age," said an elderly woman to me this summer. She finished the sentence with a severe fit of coughing, and sank back exhausted in the chair, while she at all who has been confined for fifteen years. "Had you done less they probably would have been able to do more," was my mental comment. From an overworked mother, they inherited impoverished physical conditions, and the mother, never suspecting the cause, wonders at the degeneracy of her daughters."

There is much good sense and truth in the remark of a modern author, that no man ever prospered in the world without the co-operation of his wife. If she unites in mutual endeavors, or rewards his labor with an endearing smile, with what confidence will he resort to his merchandise, or his farm; fly over lands, sail over seas, meet difficulty, or encounter danger, if he only knows that he is not spending his strength in vain, but that his labor will be rewarded by the sweets of home? Solitude and disappointment enter the history of every man's life; and he is half provided for his voyage who finds but an associate for his happy hours.

Then and Now.

Mrs. M. Van Cott, in a recent lecture, said: "Fifty years ago we burned the same materials for light as they did 5,000 years ago. The lamps and torches that illumined the caverns of the earth were as brilliant and were probably of the same materials as those of the earlier receptacles of Washington. The same might be said of locomotion. Nimrod and Noah it traveled at about the same rate of speed as our fathers. He remembered traveling from Albany to Utica, and making three miles an hour clear through the States in Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and 100 miles into Virginia.

"In those days they lived for love and for a plain, simple home, with all its happiness and comforts. In the then marriage relation, with its hallowed influence, was the offspring of love; in the now it was the offspring of lust and sale, and the family was metamorphosed into a wretched struggle for fashionable display. One man married to increase his respectability, one to please his wife, another to please his neighbors, and another to procure service without being obliged to pay for it. One girl married because she did not like to work, and wanted to be supported by a man; another, in fancy work, with ample time to go out. He sometimes saw these butterflies in the street, with abundance of fiery, cheap jewelry, head gear, and speaking of female head gear, he might as well have said, 'one could break the second commandment in worshipping it, because it was unlike anything in the heavens above or the earth beneath.'

"The new era was the fashion to make old maids and old bachelors subjects of ridicule, but wouldn't it be better to be laughed at because you are not married, than never to laugh at all, because you are married? If you are married in the manner in which she was modest in the presence of gentlemen, or if she was kind to animals, she was cut out for an old maid. Neatness, modesty, thrift, order, and humanity seem to be the never-failing characteristics of that terrible creature, the old maid. But, be it asked, were not some of the women whose existence was a blessing to the world, of this class? Yes, and I will name them. Nightingale, Miss Carpenter, Clara Barton, Miss Dix, and hosts of others. We were Christians, and yet we worshipped the means of all Gods; we bowed the knee to mammon, and yet we were sound and were often honored, but the moneyless sound was always despised. In some of our cities it was scarcely possible to conduct a man of crime. He did not believe in hanging men, but asked did they ever hear of a poor man having three trials for murder? (Applause.) The question was one of right or wrong, of guilt or innocence, but not of wealth or poverty."

Living in a Light-House.

Light-houses are strange and lonely homes for men to live in. Some of them are perched out on the ocean, with the land scarcely in sight, and the restless sea forever beating and moaning around them. The keepers of these do not see other human faces than their own in a quarter of a year. Night and day they are on the watch, gladdened awhile by a sail that appears for a little while and then floats out of sight, below the horizon. The light-keepers are a world, for all they know of its concerns, its losses and gains, its battles and its victories, the changes that each day brings forth. There are other light-houses situated on the coast, but so remote that they are never visited; and others that are surrounded by the civilization of a fishing village, and on summer days are crowded by fashionable people from the neighboring watering places. But for the most part, except in the approaches to flourishing ports, they are built out on the farthest margin of the land, on far-reaching capes and peninsulas, on the distant shores of detached rocks and sandy shoals. The light-ships are still worse off, anchored as they are in stormy waters, and forever rolling, plunging, heaving in perpetuity, on the distant waves of the sea, while other vessels are passing and re-passing, shortening sail as they enter port and spreading the canvas as they start out anew.

The light-ships are manned by men alone, but in the light-houses the keepers are allowed to have their wives, and children are born unto them and brought up with the sea and the winds and the sun and the stars for companions. Many a pretty story or poem has been woven about children living in this fashion. They learn the secrets and wonders of the sea, and feel glad when it sings softly on their ears, and sad when its bosom is ruffled and white in the storms. Their little heads are full of strange fancies about nature, and I do not believe they could understand or enjoy the life you and I lead at home. Some might even think of them as real children. They seem more like water-sprites that have their homes in the blue depths among other delicate plants that blossom there. But they have lessons to learn from school-books, and a great many things to do in their father's household. Their life, with all its romances, is not one of idleness, you may be sure.—From "Our Light-ships," by W. H. Riding. St. Nicholas for October.

THE AUSTRIAN POLAR EXPEDITION.—According to accounts in the late London journals, the Austrian North Pole expedition was frozen in at the north point of Nova Zembla, in August, 1872, and was driven in a northwesterly direction with the ice. The crew were five months in vain, during the summer of 1873, to free the ship. In the autumn of that year, north of the 80th degree of latitude, unknown land was discovered, whose boundary line north and west was not to be seen. A thin line was exposed, in sledges, from the 9th of March to the 4th of May, 1874, up to the 83d degree. In honor of the Emperor of Austria, this was named Franz Joseph Land. There were no signs of animal life. On the 25th of May, 1874, the crew left the ship Theodoroff, in four sledges, and after traveling ninety-six days, reached Nova Zembla, where they met with some Russian sappers and were taken to Wardoe, in Norway, after undergoing indescribable suffering and privations.

It has been discovered that the jointed fishing-rod was invented because one can't hide a long cane pole under his coat Sunday.

Scientific men dispute as to the species of grasshopper prevalent this year. Some maintain that it is the red-legged variety; others take the yellow-legged hopper's leg does not seem to have any appreciable effect on his appetite.

A well, wishing to make himself interesting, asked, "Marie, what do you suppose I was a hundred years ago?" "Just what you are now, nothing at all," was the prompt reply.

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The new era was the fashion to make old maids and old bachelors subjects of ridicule, but wouldn't it be better to be laughed at because you are not married, than never to laugh at all, because you are married? If you are married in the manner in which she was modest in the presence of gentlemen, or if she was kind to animals, she was cut out for an old maid. Neatness, modesty, thrift, order, and humanity seem to be the never-failing characteristics of that terrible creature, the old maid. But, be it asked, were not some of the women whose existence was a blessing to the world, of this class? Yes, and I will name them. Nightingale, Miss Carpenter, Clara Barton, Miss Dix, and hosts of others. We were Christians, and yet we worshipped the means of all Gods; we bowed the knee to mammon, and yet we were sound and were often honored, but the moneyless sound was always despised. In some of our cities it was scarcely possible to conduct a man of crime. He did not believe in hanging men, but asked did they ever hear of a poor man having three trials for murder? (Applause.) The question was one of right or wrong, of guilt or innocence, but not of wealth or poverty."

Living in a Light-House.

Light-houses are strange and lonely homes for men to live in. Some of them are perched out on the ocean, with the land scarcely in sight, and the restless sea forever beating and moaning around them. The keepers of these do not see other human faces than their own in a quarter of a year. Night and day they are on the watch, gladdened awhile by a sail that appears for a little while and then floats out of sight, below the horizon. The light-keepers are a world, for all they know of its concerns, its losses and gains, its battles and its victories, the changes that each day brings forth. There are other light-houses situated on the coast, but so remote that they are never visited; and others that are surrounded by the civilization of a fishing village, and on summer days are crowded by fashionable people from the neighboring watering places. But for the most part, except in the approaches to flourishing ports, they are built out on the farthest margin of the land, on far-reaching capes and peninsulas, on the distant shores of detached rocks and sandy shoals. The light-ships are still worse off, anchored as they are in stormy waters, and forever rolling, plunging, heaving in perpetuity, on the distant waves of the sea, while other vessels are passing and re-passing, shortening sail as they enter port and spreading the canvas as they start out anew.