LITTLE LADIES' WALK.

FRANK H. STRAUFFER IN GOOD HOUSEKEEPING.

There were crickets in the bushes,
And glow worms in the grass,
And the crows among the pine trees
Were holding noisy mass,
And the harebells were a-ringing
To greet the little lass.

From the topmost rail a squirrel
Winked at her with one eye;
She laughed to see a peacock
With saucy strut go by,
And then an ugly hop-toad
Made her run away and cry.

She toddled home unsteady,
With dilapidated look;
One shoe was in the brambles,
The other in the brook;
Her parasol was minus
The little wary crook.

Her hair was all a tangle,
There were blisters on her nose,
Her face was stained with berries,
And rumpled were her clothes,
And through her draggled stockings
Peeped out her pink white toes.

Poor thing! She is so "dreadful sleepy"
The "Sand man" he went past;
She wants some "milk an' cookies"
To break the hour's fast—
And of the "jolly fun" she had
We'll never hear the last!

A LOVER'S QUARTETTE.

"Well, if you can't get your own consent, Mrs. Deery, I suppose you can't," said Mr. Perrin, his reproachful gaze fixed upon the fly promenading the widow's plump wrist. "I had hoped on reflection that you would come to consider my proposal favorably, but it seems you think you couldn't be happy with me."

"I couldn't be happy with Roxana," responded the lady impetuously; then, checking herself, she flushed like the woodbine at the window, and in her turn gazed down upon the itinerating fly.

"Oh, if you refuse me on account of sister, Mrs. Deery, I really can't take no' for an answer," cried her suitor with an encouraged air.

The widow's gaze never swerved from the insect, now chafing its stiffened legs upon her thumb.

"You'd have no trouble in getting on with sister, I'll wager," persued the eager wooer. "You rarely see an even-tempered woman."

"Yes, that's just it, Mr. Perrin; Roxana's too perfect," broke forth the lady, brushing away the fly with startling energy. "It would fidget me to death to live with her. She's a chosen vessel, and I'm only common clay."

The widow Deery, common clay, indeed! Mr. Perrin would have divined the contrary unaided by the officious sunbeam which darted out at that instant to point out her manifold attractions. Being deeply in love, he took advantage of his opportunity to pay a handsome compliment and to renew his suit.

For one intoxicating moment his fair listener wavered, but the moment passed.

"Hush, please, Mr. Perrin! Don't say any more about it!" cried she, with a toss of her bewitching brown curls. "I might care for you"—the tremor in her voice was very nearly his undoing—"I might care for you, but I could not breathe with Roxana. Think how my little boy would worry her! She wouldn't speak an unkind word, but every time he left sticky finger-prints on a door I should feel that she wished that he and his mother had staid away."

"I might—" Mr. Perrin paused, shocked at his base impulse. Had he actually been about to remark that he might provide sister with another home?—sister, who but for devotion to his interests, might now be matronizing a home of her own? Dear, faithful Roxana! Could he ever requite her for those weary years of watchfulness beside the couch of his helpless, dying wife? The full measure of the sacrifice he had known at the time, but now had no doubt that for Climena's sake and his she had discarded Joel Kirby. No, no; sister should never be requested to vacate the dwelling over which she had ruled so long and so well! And to Mr. Perrin's credit be it stated, that in the ardor of his passion for the little widow he closed his lips on the disloyal words that perchance might have won her, and strode forth from her cottage a rejected lover.

Mr. Perrin's feet had traversed the meadow and ascended the slope of the pasture adjoining ere his mind had caught up with them. Then he murmured half audibly: "I wonder whether Kirby *did* call this afternoon? When I saw his team coming over the ridge, it struck me I might as well steal off through the orchard. Considering he's in the neighborhood looking up old friends, he can't civilly pass by Roxana; and I wouldn't be a hindrance in case.—"

His soliloquy merged into a low whistle of satisfaction. He had reached the bars opposite his own gate, and at the gate, his fore-feet deep in a hollow pawed by their impatience, stood Mr. Kirby's gay sorrel.

At the spectacle Mr. Perrin's heart bounded within him and he grasped the topmost rail for support. Should he lead the forgotten horse away to the table, or should he by so doing appear to take too much for granted? He desired to be hospitable, he desired to be exceedingly hospitable, but he must not convey the impression that he was over-zealous for a brother-in-law, and thus annoy Roxana. Sister was so fastidious!

In unprecedented excitement the habitually easy-going man debated within himself regarding the course of conduct befitting this exceptional occasion, and finally judged it best to interfere with the probable wooing in no particular. Accordingly he crept quietly around to the porch door with a surreptitious glance at the sitting-room window in passing. A brisk fire of chips revealed to him his rather prim blonde sister seated in a low rocker before the hearth, and Joel Kirby leaning against the mantel near her, volubly discoursing.

"They've opened the ball without me, I guess," mused the skulking host-ess facetiously, as he hitched his chair along to the kitchen stove to warm his feet in the oven. "Seeing that it's the first visit, I must say that Joel stays it out well. Unquestionably he means business. What's to prevent? He's a first-rate fellow and'll make a kind husband. If I wasn't sure of that I wouldn't consent to his having Roxana. I should hate to have him take her out to California. I hope it is true that he has bought back the old homestead. Well, well, wouldn't I like to be a little mouse in the sitting-room wall about this time?"

Could he have had his wish a most astonished little mouse would the worthy man have presented.

"You are the most morbidly conscientious person, Roxy, that I know of," Mr. Kirby was saying with a frown that scored his forehead with horizontal lines like the staff in written music. "If I could only convince you that it was your duty to become my wife, I should stand some chance of getting you; but unluckily for me, you've cherished the notion that you must keep house for your brother until you—"

"Brother needs me," murmured Miss Roxana, tears swelling in her eyes of "baby blue."

"And don't I need you? Haven't I some rights? During your stricken sister's illness I consented to waive these, but now she is gone and I want you."

"Don't Joel, don't."

"I tell you I do, and I can't help it," cried Mr. Kirby with grim humor. "When I couldn't move you by letter I resolved I'd come and speak for myself. You used to say you loved me, Roxy. Can't you—"

"You know plenty of other ladies, Joel, younger and more pleasing," faltered Miss Roxana, nervously smoothing the pale gilding of hair that framed her temples in a gothic arch.

"They are nothing to me," replied the gentleman curtly, as if he esteemed the fact a matter of regret.

Assured of the favor of more than one pretty girl of his acquaintance, was it not a little hard that the full current of his being must needs be set toward this unresponsive woman of thirty? It had been ever thus with Joel Kirby from his perverse childhood, when, if he wanted cake, no human power could induce him to nibble gingerbread.

"No, Roxy, there's only one woman in the world for me," he continued in a softer tone. "Your brother is of a different temperament. Has it never occurred to you that he may marry again?"

"Brother marry! Oh, no, indeed, he'll never marry—*never!*" cried Miss Roxana, grounded and rooted in the belief that her brother's heart was entombed with the dead Climena. "No, he could not take another wife, and you see he has only me. I couldn't be so cruel as to leave him."

To all Mr. Kirby's subsequent pleadings she made this same reply, but it soothed his chafing spirit not a little that she made it with faltering, and that she parted from himself with tears.

As the sound of his rapid wheels died away in the distance she hastily dried her eyes and hurried into the kitchen to see about the belated supper. Mr. Perrin still gloating over castles in Spain, looked up with the roguish purpose of addressing her as "Mrs. Kirby," but dismayed at her troubled countenance, remarked instead that the "days were getting shorter"—a fact that she had observed before.

He felt as if he had received a blow. For him there was, there could be, but one interpretation of his sister's unwonted emotion. She loved Kirby, and Kirby no longer cared for her. Poor girl, she dreamed that a man's affections were like granite boulders, incapable of change, and she was awakening with a shock. Hapless Roxana! She too had her trials. Keenly sympathetic, the magnanimous brother concealed his own disappointment as best he could, and lavished upon his sorrowful sister an excess of tenderness.

"You have the knack of spoiling me for other folks' cooking, little woman, that's the truth," said he at tea-time, ostentatiously heaping his plate with cream toast. "How should I ever get along without you?"

"That'll make her feel that I appreciate her if Joel doesn't, he mused benevolently; while she, on her side of the table, was thinking, "It's just as I suspected; it would kill brother to lose me."

"Oh, you'd manage somehow. Maybe you'd marry," she ventured timidly, almost hearing the fluttering of the lost Climena's wings.

"Poh! poh! sister, nothing seems less likely," answered her brother, in a voice so sad that Miss Roxana chided herself for having opened her old wound afresh. But she had done it for Joel's sake. She owed it to Joel to make sure that there could be no misunderstanding.

The October days with their noonday patches of sunshine and their heavy borders of twilight came and went. In a spasm of hope that the charming widow might yet consent to share the domestic scepter with his sister, Mr. Perrin made a second proposal, only to receive a second decided, though flattering refusal. Mr. Kirby repeated his call upon Miss Roxana, and departed, cursing fate, and by no means loving Mr. Perrin, whom he supposed perfectly acquainted with the relations between himself and Roxana. Overtaking Mr. Perrin one day walking home from the post-office, Mr. Kirby with inward reluctance asked him to ride. With equal reluctance Mr. Perrin accepted, reflecting, "If I ain't civil he'll take it that I'm mad because he doesn't renew his offer to Roxana, and I wont humor him."

"Heavy frost last night," growled Mr. Kirby.

"Very," assented the other, conscious of an inward chill. "Winter is upon us. Shall you spend it in Maine?"

"My plans are uncertain," snarled Mr. Kirby; adding, mentally, "Thanks to you, sir,"

"Of course you can choose your own climate. There's the advantage of having plenty of money and no family ties."

"No family ties! Whose fault was it that he had no family ties?" mused the irate bachelor, making rapid paces over his long beard as if he would mesmerize the pain in his breast. "Might not Roxana have been his wife years ago but for the necessities of this selfish brother?"

"Though I've lately heard it hinted, Joel, that you are thinking of marrying," Mr. Perrin blundered on, in his embarrassment saying the very thing he had resolved not to say.

Mr. Kirby snapped his whip, and transfixed his companion with a glance so frigid that poor Mr. Perrin shivered as if he was impaled on an icicle.

"Your cousin is a fine girl, Joel—an uncommonly fine girl. I—I congratulate you," he stammered, wishing it would do to get out and walk.

"You are *too* kind, Perrin—*too* kind by half," sneered Mr. Kirby, letting go the reins of his anger. "You've robbed me of one bride, sir, and now you want to make amends, do you, by choosing me another?"

"Why, Kirby, what are you raving about? When have I injured you—matrimonially or otherwise?" cried Mr. Perrin in a tone of injured innocence. "You're laboring under some strange delusion."

"Do you pretend it's a delusion of mine that but for you Roxana would be my wife?"

"Oh, he's twitting me on old scores," mused Mr. Perrin, aggrieved. "He blames me for letting sister give up her prospects in life for Climena's sake. Sister would do it and she never told me there was anything between her and Joel." "When a man's in a tight place, Joel, he's apt to realize his own needs better than the needs of his brethren, I suppose," he said aloud after a moment's pause. "But I'm sorry if you bear me a grudge."

"Tight place! Do you call yourself in a tight place, Perrin—a strong, hearty fellow like you? You ought to be independent of your sister. You ought to hire a housekeeper and let Roxana go."

"Let Roxana go! Where?" interrogated the befogged Mr. Perrin.

"Wherever she prefers to live. I should let her decide that after we were married," replied Mr. Kirby, impatiently. "The main point is to get her away from you. She says you say you couldn't live without her."

"Yes, I *did* say it—I *did* say it; but I take it all back," cried Mr. Perrin, fairly blinking in the light that suddenly illuminated his darkened mind. "I see things clearer than I did, Joel. I won't stand any longer between you and Roxana."

"Your hand on it?"

"My hand on it, Joel. I shall be glad—proud, that is—to give sister to you; and if you are going on up to the house you can tell her I said so."

"Thank you, Perrin—thank you. And if I've spoken sharply I beg your pardon," cried Mr. Kirby, smiling like a Santa Claus.

"Oh, it's all right. Everything is all right," replied Mr. Perrin, too happy to keep it to himself. "Drop me here, Kirby, please; I have an engagement to make. And make it to-day I shall and I will, God willing," he added beneath his breath, as he dismounted before the door of the widow Deery.

The Art of Conversation.

The fine art of conversation is little cultivated. Yet how much of positive value it leads to life! Of all the means by which one can give pleasure to another this is the very best; yet, although it would seem to be within the reach of every one, there are few of us, indeed, who have ever taken part in a really good conversation. This realm of conversation would seem to be preeminently the woman's kingdom, and history tells of women who, by means of this rare art, have influenced whole periods and social states. Such a wide power is not accorded to every woman; in its highest expression conversation is a gift rather than an art; but any woman may aspire to putting at ease every one who approaches her, and diffusing an atmosphere of bright and graceful thought around. To bring out the best thoughts of one's interlocutor is, perhaps, the highest touch of this dainty art; and, indeed, there is something almost divine in it when it reaches this stage, for to redeem from the commonplace and to inspire with loftier mood is a godlike rather than a human work.

Such an art is worth cultivating; but how? There is no text-book of conversation, no method of talking prescribed in the schools. It is one of the things that must be learned by doing it. Yet we set down as a fundamental rule that, to converse well, three things are necessary; the first is sympathy, and the second is sympathy, and the third is sympathy. To go out of one's self, to meet those with whom one talks, not half way, but clear upon their own ground; to lift the veil from their best thought—this is the secret of good conversation. It is talking, as Bacon tells us, which makes the ready man; but not all talking makes the ready conversationalist. Not monologue, nor talk in which the center of interest is in the talker. There must be the clash of counter-interest, the friction of mind and mind, the shuttlecock play of words thrown quickly to and fro.

Anthony Trollope lays down as a rule for novelists that conversation should be broken into short sentences; that no one utterance should be allowed more than a certain number of lines. The rule holds good beyond the limits of the novel; short sentences, unincumbered by parenthesis or explanatory clauses, are absolutely essential to conversation. It is not politeness, but the nature of things, which forbids the speaker to monopolize conversation. Conversation ceases the moment talk becomes a monologue. A great man now and then, like Coleridge, might be permitted to do all the talking; but that is not conversation which he does, but something quite different, however valuable.

Mildred Corrects her Brother.

"Why, James, what is the matter?" asked the High School girl, as her brother came in with his eye blackened.

"O, had a fight with a couple of kids; but I'll get at 'em one at a time and take it out of their hides, see if I don't," replied Jim.

"O, James, don't say 'take it out of their hides,' that is vile slang. Say, extract it from their epidermis."—*Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph.*

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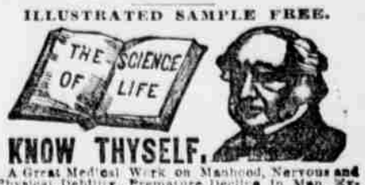

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