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A FARMER'S WIFE.

We know a refined, intelligent woman, living among the green hills of Vermont, whose life is typical of hundreds of that vicinity and scores scattered throughout the far west. She rises at five o'clock in the morning, chops wood, draws water, makes fires, prepares the meals for five stalwart "hired men," besides doing the family washing, ironing, scrubbing, churning, preserving, pickling, mending, and knitting. She beholds the chickens, feeds the hens and calves, and is occasionally called upon to accelerate the departure of pigs to that bourn from which no pig ever returns. Her work is never done. She fries doughnuts at ten o'clock at night and begins life on pie the next morning. Her only dissipation is prayer-meetings, funerals and huckle-berrings, varied by winter kettle-drums, where the guests sew carpet rags, refresh with cider, forfords, and kisses. Her literature is limited to Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Josiah Allen's Wife and Zion's Herald; her music to a fountain filled with blood, dismal sounds from the tombs and invitations to anxious sents; her pictures to a plump prodigal son, a perpetual Samuel, a furious Cain, and an amiable George Washington. Napoleon, on his death bed at St. Helena, a weeping willow and a graveyard of hair, and a few glistening tinctures of freshly engaged couples, who, with hands clasped, hair oiled, and imitation watch chains spread out to show, stare rigidly into a feature the counterpart of her own. Her hie-a-bra consists of wax-work, daguerotypes, plaster dogs with green noses, yellow baskets, and crushed strawberry tails, and a shell book containing reward of merit cards, and pathetic remembrances of her childhood years—the only recognition of her goodness that the poor little woman ever had. Her dress is calico all the year round for week days, and black alpaca for Sundays. Her windows are covered with green paper shades, and the parlor floor with the envy and awe of the neighborhood, a red and pink atrocities in yellow horns of plenty.

She is a woman after Rev. Morgan Dix's heart. She stays at home. The glorious majestic mountains, the flashing cascades, the leafy woods, the splendor of the blue skies, the soft white clouds, and sweet-smiling daisy fields are not for her, except in tantalizing glimpses, which only increase the thirst of her thirsting soul. She has no time to possess the sense of power and peace that comes from those stately mountains; no time to revel in the exquisite beauty of those waterfalls; no time to lie on the grass and watch the softly sailing clouds, or trace the truthful symbols and discover the won derous revelations that nature gives to those who love and understand her. Yet this woman's husband has made a little fortune of \$30,000 from lumber, which is considered something colossal in those regions where wants are few and pleasures circumscribed. She has been brought up to believe that he was created a superior being. So has he. He is coarse, red-haired, freckled, pious, penurious and aesthetically. He has a change of heart and one change of "meetin' clothes," in which he looks more hideous than he does in his overalls. His chief satisfaction is to chew tobacco, talk in class meeting and to get a bargain. He never owes a penny and never gives one. He can pray, and think he can sing. It takes him thirty minutes every night and fifteen minutes every morning to tell the Lord of several mistakes in the universe, and to ask a "eternal" vengeance on the wicked by plunging them into everlasting fire, and another is to request for "power to wrestle with the stranger within his gates," and notwithstanding her promptly paid board bills, to bring her to a sense of her own vile nature and hardened heart, created bad in the first place, only to be purified and saved by the acceptance of this man's peculiar theological beliefs. After singing, exhorting and wheezing, he takes to snoring with an equal spirit and energy that makes him audible all through the night, and the snoring within his gates to look for a new boarding place next morning. It does not occur to him to use his money to make his wife and their lives any happier, or that he can afford to bring a couple of strong servants into the house to perform the menial work of himself and his hired men. He means well. His superior being does not know any better. The circumstances of his narrow life and the inheritance of a narrow nature are accountable for his blind ignorance.

One day his wife returned from the village after selling 50 cents' worth of eggs produced by her own hens. She promptly asked if she could keep the proceeds. He generously handed her 15 cents and kept the rest, with the grumble, "Wimmen folks is allers spendin'." He did not realize the meanness of the act, but when we saw it, a line of Tennyson's seemed to spring suddenly in the air and wrench him in living words that said, "half his little soul is dirt." But he does not know that, and never will in this life. He cannot read the pitiful story stamped upon his wife's care-worn face, with its habitual expression of unconscious self-abnegation and meek resignation. They never have any unpleasant walks, talks, jokes, read any books, or have friendly companionship together. He never gives her ice cream, anniversary presents, unexpected praise, flowers or kisses. When she dies she may have a flower in her coffin, which will have a flower in place of place, as none ever came into her married life.

Twice she made feeble attempts to bring some cheerfulness into their home. She worked her husband a pair of slippers for Christmas, and placed a bunch of snowdrops upon the table at Easter. He grantly tells her to "take 'em away, and not in herage the scarlet woman by bringin' sish popish notions into the house. The country fences, barns, taverns,

rock and landscape were once ablaze with flaming posters announcing the coming of a traveling circus and menagerie. She gazed on these pictured wonders, on the monkey garodies, pathetic camels, repulsive serpents, leaping tigers, flying figures, complacent fat women, bush-haired dwarfs, dissatisfied Albinoes, pompous dwarfs, sunshiny giants, the sacred cow of Burmah and the behemoth of scripture. How her very soul seched with intense longing to behold these oriental animals from far away tropical countries, from "Africa's burning sands," of which she had read in the Bible and in Little Henry and his Bear. Was it possible that those huge, ungainly elephants could stand on their heads, planks and barrels, play tunes on hand-organs, and do other undreamed of things, perfectly unnatural and unpleasant to an elephant?

Was it true that horses waltzed and dogs hung each other? That a woman could be shot from a cannon and a tattooed man walk shivering about clad only in his cashmere skin, and gauzy beings fly through hoops of fire over the backs of horses that had to make up their minds to see it? It was wonderful, a fairy tale, a myth, perhaps. Everything was reversed, the toes of the rider, the clown in the ring, the ideas and trunks of the elephants. Seeing was believing, and she wanted, oh, how she wanted to go! It would be the one pleasure, the one grand epoch of her dreary life. Only those who have been forced to remain in the unvarying routine of hard work, care and monotony, can appreciate the happiness it would be, could this down trodden little Yankee woman go to the circus. She read on the brilliant posters that "people, press and pulpit commended this great moral show, unparalleled in grandeur and magnificence, and that nothing was said or done that could offend the most moral and fastidious person."

To be sure Zion's Herald had not advertised it, and she had not heard it indorsed by her own minister from his pulpit. But one minister differed from another minister in opinions, and if even one attended the circus, surely she could. She had no money, and was afraid to ask for any; or to broach the subject to her husband, fearing of opposition. She remained awake at night, wondering if she was a wicked, designing woman for not mentioning her desire, and where she could obtain means to accomplish it. This was the first time she ever dared to strike out for herself. It showed how keen was the yearning for a little brightness to come into her cold and cheerless life.

She knew it was useless to ask for any of the eggs, butter, cheese, or milk money that she had earned. She arose two hours earlier the next morning, did much of the housework, and, while her husband was drinking molasses and water in the hay field, she slipped away on a pretext and winged feet, and under the burning August sun, with hands trembling and heart beating with hope and excitement, she picked five quarts of berries, that were sold at the hotel in S. The next day, with the coveted money held tight in her ungloved hand, she hurriedly climbed into the wagon of a neighbor who had called by request to carry her with his wife and children to the circus, all joyful at the unusual holiday. How her heart beat, how her limbs shook! Once off and out of view of the hay field, she would breathe free. One taste of pleasure and it was hers forever, no matter what happened afterward. They turned the corner and a man appeared on the dusty road. It was her husband, sent there by one of those malicious chances that sometimes "thwart the will of men" and women. He stopped them. Explanations followed.

"It is my money. I didn't take it from the house. I earned it yesterday," she faltered, holding up her toil-worn thorn-scratched hand. It was her only appeal, and it fell mute upon her quivering lips, as he sternly ordered her to "get down." She ought not to have got down, and we are sorry to say she did. But she is meek and good, and she "obeyed," with her eyes and heart full of tears. He walked unrelentingly by her side to the house. He took her hardly won bits of silver. He said they should go into the contribution box next Sunday, to atone for the heinous sin she had committed in wishing to enter unboly places. He entered the closed sanctuary of his parlor. He removed the tobacco quid from his mouth and placed it upon the mantel. Then he prayed. Kneeling in the center of the floor, on the biggest, yellowest, most unfaded "horn of plenty" that besprinkled the carpet, he asked the Lord in nasal tones, to chasten the worldly spirit of his wife, to withhold from her the snares, of temptation baited by the devil, and to keep her from the flesh pots of Egypt and Vermont. She never complains. She suffers vaguely, not fully comprehending the servile position she holds in her husband's house. We are glad she does not. In her case it would make no difference if she did understand it.

This is only one woman's life out of thousands, under varying conditions and circumstances, to be sure, but true just the same. Yet there are unthinking men and women who say that "justice and equality are not good for women. They have all the privileges that are necessary."

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