

'Old Mother Responsibility'

RONA MORRIS WORKMAN
ROCKING W RANCH

There are times when I want

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to throw myself on the floor like a naughty rebellious five-year-old and kick and scream that "I ain't gonna do it. I won't. I won't." But I didn't get away with anything like that when I was five, and I can't get away with such actions now, for "Mother Responsibility" yanks me to my feet and says sternly, "Now, listen here, daughter. We'll have no tantrums in this family, and if you try anything of the sort you will find my hand applied where it will do the most good."

I am sure there come days in every woman's life when she looks about her house in the morning and thinks, "I've got to sweep and dust and make beds and wash dishes and cook three meals and tend to the children and mend—" and she sees herself doing those same things on and on for years and years until she is so old she can do nothing but sit in a wheel-chair and growl at somebody else about the housework. I am also quite sure that men have those moments. They look at their wives and the hostages they have given to fortune and they think of having to do all the thousand and one routine

things that must be done in order to buy clothes and food, to pay the rent, or the interest on the mortgage, and they wonder why under the bright and shining sun they were ever such fools as to jump into the matrimonial maelstrom. And both men and women begin thinking of all the interesting and delightful things they could be doing if they were not shackled with the biting bonds of responsibility.

At such times people react in various ways. Some develop amnesia; some men go out and get drunk, or kick the cat and snarl at their wives and children, and some women go on a shopping binge—which is almost as good as going out and getting drunk, and even more expensive, while others move the furniture around or tear loose in some other way, or gripe at their husbands at the breakfast table and wonder, audibly, why they ever married them. Oh, there are lots of ways to express that feeling, but I think most folks just growl a bit inside and then go on with the routine tasks until they are finished. Usually, by the time these tasks are completed for the day, they have forgotten their resentment and are busily planning things for tomorrow.

The Big Boss and I were talking about milking the other day. I don't help milk since the boys came home, but I have done my twice-daily stint in the cowbarn in my time. I remarked that I didn't dislike milking; the only thing I objected to was the fact that at a certain time, twice a day, you had to drop whatever you were doing, get out to the barn, rain or shine, and jerk the juice out of a cow. Cows are creatures of unbreakable habit; you have to milk them right on time or they react in a very unprofitable manner. (I think a variation in milking time disturbs the balance of their hormones, or something like that.) The Big Boss looked at me thoughtfully. "There are a lot of things that have to be done at certain times, regardless of what you want to do, aren't there?" Of course there are. Every man that works has to get to his job on time; meals have to be at least approximate a certain time—unless you want yammering hungry men and children wanting to know when dinner will be ready—and most of the other things in life, like taxes and bills and dirty dishes and social affairs, have to be attended to at the appointed time or you are liable to get into difficulties. (Also, in my case, getting this weekly article to the editor before the "dead-line." I'll admit that there are many times when I am so close to that fatal "dead-line" that I drop it on his desk and run before he gets a chance to glare at me. This morning I am not even going near his desk. I'm going to slip it under the door.)

Seriously though, I wonder if we would be really happy if we didn't have all these things that must be done. There are doubtless people in the world who have no duties howling at them. I have read of such folks, but I have never met them, not moving in that social class. They seem to have no responsibilities, no routine work to do, none of the things which occupy so many hours of our days, yet, judging

from what one reads of them in the papers, they are not as happy as us common folks, the workers of the world, and they seem to be rushing madly about seeking something that will give them satisfaction and yet never finding it.

I remember a little story I once read. A man died and went to a beautiful place. He had absolutely nothing to do, no responsibilities. He didn't need to eat or sleep or work or to think of any body but himself. He could do exactly as he pleased. For a long time he did just that, then he began getting horribly bored. He had tried everything and grown tired of it. At last he accosted one of those who seemed in charge of the place and said, "You know, old chap, I'm getting beastly tired of all this. Frankly, I don't think much of your old heaven."

The one to whom he had spoken looked at him and grinned a little. "Say, bud," he answered derisively, "where'd you get the idea this is heaven. Don't you know you're in hell?"

Yep, there is a nice little moral to that story. I don't think I need to point it out. I'll just sign off on this article, get up and clean the house and bake a pie for the Big Boss. He's a pretty good egg and right now he is out doing something he probably doesn't really want to do,



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