

## Kitty Howard's Journal.—No. IX.

EDITED BY MRS. ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.!

DEC. 25.—It is late and I must only jot down a word before I go to sleep, for the two days have been very bright and hopeful, and they must be marked in white.

MEM.—I observe that people record their misdeeds, sorrowful days and nights; their *noche tristes*, as Cortes called one dreadful night of his Mexico, but never record their hopeful ones; their days of sunshine—their periods of calm, content, of happiness. We women ought to discern the “silver lining” of every cloud.

Christmas eve I read to the children Clement Moore's beautifully conceived poem, beginning:

‘Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house  
That a creature was stirring, not even a mouse,”

which they were made very full of fun and laughter, and Tom declared I read better than the women who read in public, which of course ought to do, for my heart goes with my face, and my audience are my lovers, and I read for love, and not money. Next I read about the shepherds on the plains of Judea, and the advent of Him who was so wonderfully gentle, yet so brave, so wise and poetic, so lovely and tender, and thoughtful, and sympathetic; and I described the world as it was, and the beautiful Child born that night, whose mission was to fill the world more than any other man. The children were all attention, and full of awe, and my pretty Hannah listened with wide-open eyes, and Harriet stole in from the nursery, as she often does at the evening lessons in the nursery.

When I had closed, Tom stooped down and kissed my brow, which was a pleasant tribute to me, and somehow brought the tears to my bright eyes; but when George, who had come unawares to me, whispered, “This must be a gate to Heaven,” I put my hand in his and said:

‘Happy days will come, dear brother, only not despair.’

Then the children hung up their stockings, and I went to bed dreaming of Santa Claus.

Bless me! the clock is striking one, and there Tom actually snoring, and I writing out my

happy record: Tom *does* snore now and then, poor darling! he *will* work his brain too hard, and he means to be a judge, and means to make me proud of him!

My light was burning low in the nursery, when, long before it was light, the children were out of bed feeling for their stockings. Hannah put the light a trifle higher, to aid in the examination. At first there were low whispers of astonishment, then giggles, and at length, as one coveted toy after another was revealed, shouts could no longer be suppressed, and all rushed to me with delighted expressions over the goodness of Santa Claus, and, “I wish you a merry Christmas,” was exchanged with smiles and kisses.

Then David and Paul stood up in the dim light and sang a verse from an old Christmas Carol, in this wise:

“God rest you, merry gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ our Saviour  
Was born upon this day,  
To save us all from Satan's power  
When we were gone astray.  
O tidings of comfort and joy,  
For Jesus Christ our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas day.”

As my two pretty boys in their white garments stood before me and sang this quaint old carol they looked, to my eyes, like little angels come to bless the unborn babe which stirred beneath my bosom, and gave me a foretaste of coming joy. Tom does not wake unless anxious, and he slept so soundly now that I had to pinch him a little vigorously, or he would have lost the lovely sight by the bedside. However, in due time he was aroused, and such was his delight they had to sing it over again, which they did in fine style. Tom declared there never were finer boys, and never was such a “Balm” in the whole world, and never such a happy family. I believe he spoke the truth.

This little surprise of the song had been managed by my good faithful Harriet, who is never tired of trying to please me. It is a great advantage in bringing up children to have the aid of reliable servants, who not only love the family, but sympathize in their views; who are intelligent and right-minded. I remember one

of this kind served in the family of my grandfather for more than *forty* years. If a lady is truly such she will naturally be kind and courteous, and not overwork her dependents. But, gracious! Kitty is getting off her soundings!

After the children had been duly hugged and kissed, they crept away to Uncle George's door, and there began to sing. We heard the door softly opened by George, and heard Jane, in a querulous tone, mutter:

"I do wish the little brats would let me sleep!"

Kitty's blood rushed up quick and red you may be sure at this, but she held her tongue; only she did relieve herself by exclaiming, very low, "The selfish, hateful creature!" at which Tom said, "That does you good to say, does it not, Kitty?" and pinched my cheek.

On Christmas night came off my little party, and the Christmas tree. On the latter was a gift for all the household; a new dress for Hannah and a hood for Harriet, and all the children of the neighborhood found something there for them. It *did* look elegant, festooned with parched corn, and lighted with small wax candles. We had a nice table with a good supper, and plenty of plain cake, and fruit for the little ones; then we had music and dancing, at which my David showed wonderful aptitude in the latter accomplishment. He was very devoted to Julia Prince, a pretty child, a little younger than his five years, and crammed her pocket with nuts and raisins. It was comical to see them kiss in the turns of the dance.

George was quite cheerful, and I am sure he is growing more hopeful. Jane was the very pink of courtesy, and every body was charmed with her. She contrived to make it appear that she had planned and executed every thing, and recommended my nicest dishes, and showed off my most elegant arrangements in such a way that my guests thought them hers, and even congratulated me upon having such a charming sister-in-law!

Kitty did not feel nice under all this, and came pretty near flaring up, but she did not. These are little things—too little to quarrel about—and yet they place one in *such a false position*, and when one has no other field of action, does not expect to be great in any thing, it is a damper to have all the wind taken out of one's little sails by deceit and hypocrisy. Gracious! it is half-past one, and I am sitting here past midnight, fretting my temper over Jane's doings! I will take a bath and wash her out of my mind, and then, with a mother's blessing upon the brows of the little ones, to sleep.

DEC. 27.—A letter from Tom's mother, announced that she will shortly be with us, and pass several weeks. I read it in silence, and Tom left the room, and then explained its contents to Jane, who sat as usual, novel in hand and crochet upon her lap. Her face reddened up as she listened; at last she exclaimed:

"Mercy! I hope George will get me away before she comes, for, if there is an abomination under the sun, it is a husband's mother—that mother George's."

I replied, "I do not see why a husband's mother should be objectionable; it seems natural to me to love the mother of the man I love; I have only seen her once, and thought her both good and noble."

"You are too green for any earthly thing," said Kitty. Mother-in-laws are always hateful, tyrannical, fault-finding, and bad. Then a beautiful mother-in-law—looking young, and being admired, like George's mother, is not to be endured. I can not and will not endure such airs. She tries to put me down, and snub me; but she found her match in me. I worried her life out by talking of her age, making her feel old. There is nothing like it to subdue a woman; always say, 'at your time of life, I am considering your age hardly suitable;' and then if she has an ache or a pain say, 'you must expect it—age will tell,' etc. Kitty Howard, you will thank me for this recipe before a month is over your head."

"O Jane, Jane, this sounds very cruel, and might distress a weak woman, but a noble creature like Tom's mother, would never care for it, other than for its insolence."

"Won't she, though? didn't she, though?" retorted Jane, with a disagreeable look out of the corner of her eyes, "Oh! I worried her so that she was glad to let me alone. I told her she would never put me under her feet, try her best."

"Who wanted to put you under her feet, Jane?" inquired Tom, who had entered the room at this moment.

"Your mother. She tried her best, but did not succeed."

Tom's eyes flashed fire, but he is a gentleman and he restrained his wrath. Somehow Tom looks very handsome when excited; he replied:

"Jane, you do not know how to appreciate a noble woman like my mother. What would she wish to put you under her feet for, as you have said? She is proud of her children, and would honor their wives if she could do so."

Then turning to me he said:

"Kitty, I should despise you if I thought I would join in this mean, wicked abuse of mother. If you are so petty and weak, you to be pitied."

Tom whipped Jane over my shoulders in say-  
this. But these family jars are always pit-  
and I hastened to create sunshine; and I  
ord them here because I foresee that they are  
e a part of Kitty Howard's life.

David now came in bright and rosy from a  
ball game with the children of the neigh-  
hood, and I gave him the motto which  
ds over the nursery mantel for his writing  
on, for he begins to put letters together very  
i. This is my motto, which I repeat every  
to my little ones:

*to-day will never come back, therefore we must  
e it all bright and beautiful.*

"How queer you are, Kitty," said Jane.  
"Who ever thought such a thing as that a day  
ld come back? For my part, I never expect  
see another bright day as long as I live,  
rge is such a mope!"

It was useless to reason with her, and I went  
with the lesson, and played "Pattycake pan"  
a little Rachel, who stands a chance of being  
ewhat neglected in the stress of my large  
ily. Jane is very tiresome. Seeing me put-  
the last stitches upon a fairy-like robe for  
re use, she said, in a most uncomfortable

:"You seem so contented in your humdrum  
Kitty, that every day I wonder at you.  
enever I look at you I think of Willis's story  
d 'Born to Love, Pigs, and Poultry.'"  
Kitty grows red in the face at petty insults,  
she does not fail to bite her own tongue  
tempted to a sharp retort; so she only  
ed:

"I am glad I do not suggest any thing worse  
our mind, Jane."

George now came in, looking very pale and  
ard. He and Tom had been settling up  
business, and he is insolvent. "Not worth  
ar, Kitty," he said to me rather than to  
with a smile more painful to see upon a  
an face than a frown.

"Never mind, George, we are all young, and  
can soon get started again. You and Jane  
comfortable here, and we can be cheerful  
resolute, and matters will come round all  
Come, I will put up my needle and play  
ne of chess with you, and you must not  
r. Kitty must be obeyed, you know,  
ce."

He dawdled back and forth from room to  
and took no interest in anything. I ob-

serve the children always avoid her. I beat  
George badly, for he does not seem to bring  
any energy into anything he does, and after  
one game he took Rachel into his arms and  
walked up and down the room, contented to  
feel her soft arms around his neck.

JAN. 20.—I am glad Tom does not read my  
journal now, as he used to do in our earlier mari-  
riage days. He said to-day:

"O Balm, I am so thankful that you are  
true, and unselfish, and never jealous. I have  
so little time to pet my little darling, that, were  
she not a reasonable wife, she would grow cross  
and discontented."

Then I put my head on his shoulder and felt  
the beating of his great, true, loving heart, and  
I told him "I was so happy, so content in his  
love that I asked for nothing more in this world  
than to be his 'Balm.'"

Then Rachel put her pretty head on his knee  
and kissed her father's hand, and Paul climbed  
to the back of his chair and kissed his forehead,  
but my first born, my David, pressed his arms  
around my neck and kissed *me*, not his father;  
whereat Tom took us both nearer to his heart,  
and placed a kiss upon the mother-boy's brow.

If Tom read my journal now as in former  
days I would not write out what I shall record,  
a sad, terrible record, a secret to be always kept  
locked up in my own heart. It would wear  
upon me very greatly did I not feel that I am  
saving Tom and his noble mother from a great  
grief by so doing. Yet such is the natural  
candor of my mind that I confess a secret  
is always painful to me. I have learned gradu-  
ally to so control my natural impulses, out of  
considerateness to others, that I can hold back  
telling what would inflict useless pain upon  
them, while I hasten with alacrity to tell all  
that will comfort or cheer them.

Let me write slowly and with caution. It  
was between Christmas and New Year that I  
played a game of chess with poor Brother  
George in the middle of the day, an unwonted  
thing to a careful little housewife.

That same evening George was very gentle;  
too grave, too tenderly earnest. Jane had been  
playing opera airs at the piano, although she  
knows well it is distasteful to all of us. We  
are all too polite to disturb her. At length,  
having tired herself out, she dawdled about  
the room, picking my rose geranium to pieces,  
pulling the tail of Monte, my mackaw, to make  
him scream; and at length sat down to the ta-  
ble, reading her novel and biting her nails. The  
two brothers had been talking, as brothers.

should, in a low voice, kindly, brotherly talk, which I always like to listen to. I had placed some fruit and nuts upon the table, with some raspberry shrub of my own making. George sipped of the latter, and then whispered to me:

"Kitty, I want you to play some music for me—just for me, my good, dear little sister."

"Certainly, I will, dear brother, and I sat down at once to the piano, running my fingers carelessly over the keys. He stopped me, by laying his hand on mine, saying:

"It makes me nervous, dear."

"Now Kitty, play that sweetly solemn hymn beginning, 'Come, ye Disconsolate,' and sing it, sister."

I did as he desired, he joining me with his sad, noble-toned voice. After a pause he asked for Old Hundred, and I shall never forget his reverent face as he sang the words:

"Be thou, O God, exalted high," etc.

It was now bed time. He kissed me upon the forehead, and I remember now that his lips were cold, and he whispered, "God bless you and Tom, and the dear little ones!"

I saw that Tom was anxious and troubled about his brother, and in spite of my own misgivings I tried to be cheerful.

I must and will state here what struck both Tom and me as very singular. Upon a bracket in the room stands a very handsome French clock, which stopped at the very moment that Mr. Howard, Tom's father, ceased to breathe in this world. It stopped as the bell struck one at midnight, and has never since been wound up. Tom and I were both awakened at the same moment by hearing this clock, so long discussed, so long silent, strike the hour of one, which was immediately followed by our ordinary clock striking the same hour.

"Have you wound up that clock which I have desired no one to touch?" asked my husband in an angry tone.

"No indeed, dear Tom; besides you have the key; no one has done so."

The curtain was looped up from the windows, and the cold clear moon shone with ghostly significance upon the face of the clock, which was now pulseless as it had been for years. A cold shudder passed over me—a strange sort of panic seized me, and I clung my arms around my husband's neck in a nameless fear.

"Poor little Kitty," cried Tom, and he was soon off in a healthful sleep again; but I could not sleep. More than once I put my hand to my forehead, for it seemed to me that I felt George's cold lips there, and I moved aside lest

my restlessness should disturb Tom, who was a great deal of sleep. At length in the grey of the morning I arose, and sat down to sleep, unwilling to lose my whole time, as I found it impossible to sleep.

Harriet had just rung the first morning bell when Jane opened my door. She had taken a rich silken dressing gown over her nightgown and looked a good deal cross and a very pale, as she said,

"I wish you would come in and see what George, I can't get a word out of him!"

A terrible presentiment seized me, a dread, a certainty, a horrible suspicion. I did not look at his face—I seized his poor cold, dead hand and took from it a vial, very small—a mere emaciated glass—and then I saw that he was gone "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Quick as thought I buried the vial amid the hot coals of the grate. How I sustained myself, how I was so calm I know not, but I had finally resolved that this dreadful secret should die with me. Jane was too cold and indifferent to heed much what transpired about her poor dear Tom, and his mother! It would have broken their hearts, and so the secret rests.

I can not and will not write of the grief of my noble husband, my darling Tom. He was grandly beautiful he looked as he stood, his tears running down his face, gazing upon the calm, smiling face of his dead brother!

"Poor boy! poor boy!" he at length exclaimed, and threw himself upon his brother's neck.

Kitty is not very much to the world, but she is much, very much at home; and she thanks God daily that she is a comfort there.

THE GREATEST BLESSING.—There is no greater blessing for a man than to have a wife who has acquired that healthy and happy instinct which leads him to take delight in his work for his work's sake; not slurring it over, not thinking how soon it will be done and got rid of, not troubling himself greatly about what men may say of it when it is done (I suspect that is the kind of workers think as little of that as Newton did when he hesitated whether to publish his discoveries or not), but putting his whole heart and mind into it, feeling that he is master of his feeling that the thing that he has turned out may be it a legal argument, or a book, or a paper, or any thing else, is conscientiously and earnestly perfected to the best of his power.—Stanley.