

Kitty Howard's Journal.—SECOND SERIES.

BY ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.

DECEMBER 15.

FOR a long time after the departure of my summer child, my beautiful Elisabeth, I wrote little in my journal except expressions of sorrow, fervent and heart-bleeding prayers. I was weak, very weak; not rebellious, but unable to fit my poor, wounded soul into the groove designed for me. Tom was forbearing and tender as ever, but I at length detected a slight disinclination on his part, to be in the room alone with me; a sort of dread of my wan, sorrowful face. Dear heart! how could it be otherwise! I had trained the dear lamb for Heaven, and she had been gathered to the fold of the good Shepherd, and yet I wet my pillow with tears; and all my duties, pleasures rather they should be called, for my household, grew irksome to me.

My children even, who were never happier than with me, felt their childish gayety rebuked by my presence. Rachel came to me with a solemn earnestness, that touched me to the heart, and said:

"Dear mamma, you tell me that Heaven is a beautiful home, and that sister has gone there to be for ever happy; and that the dear Lord will love her, as he did the children when he was in this world, and yet you cry—are you sorry she has gone to the dear, blessed home?"

I laid her head upon my breast, and sobbed aloud; whereat the sweet child patted my shoulder and murmured, "darling mamma," and then she knelt at my feet and prayed in a low, audible voice, "Dear Jesus, comfort my mother; send my sister back again to comfort her."

I know not what passed over me. A great burden was suddenly lifted from my heart. A heavenly, serene peace, born of no earthly source, filled my whole being with ineffable calm. Methought the little arms of Elisabeth encircled my neck, and a new sense had been developed by which I saw as it were into the "soul of things." Rachel's upturned face was and was not hers. She grew transfigured, and I beheld clearly the body of the resurrection. She was translucent, but not transparent: fair—oh! how fair!

I can not describe what I saw in its infinitude of beauty, but I murmured, "Strange that a

harp of a thousand strings should keep in tune so long." The nerves were threads of pearl interweaving a net-work of lace; the bones were ivory, white as snow, and translucent as alabaster; there was no ruby fluid like the blood, but an amber light, flowing in currents, coursed through the whole system with a tremulous, scintillating motion, producing an indescribable, harmonious music. An ethereal lightness, an undulating softness pervaded all, as if a breath might lift it into thin air, while the golden tissues of her head floated backward, revealing eyes of a starry brightness.

How long this heavenly vision lasted I know not, but it faded and was gone, leaving my earnest, gentle Rachel kneeling at my feet, and she exclaimed:

"Dear mamma, your face was all bright, like the sun!"

While all this was passing in my room, a heavy storm was beating over the roof, and rattling at the windows. As yet the snow has been chary of its presence, and the winter has been thus far an open one. I scarcely heeded the storm, so great was the peace in my own soul, and I arose and washed my face and hands, and went forth and saluted my household with a smile. It infused new life into all, and each one vied in attentions to my comfort.

I have not talked much about the poetry I write, because the gift is something beyond my will, the gift truly from God, and can not be evolved by mere culture or inclination. It is marvelous how the external world responds to the emotions of the poet, and how he brings to her shrine not what all behold, but what exists in his own soul. I wrote this sonnet as partially expressing the glories, so to speak, revealed to my mind by what I have but imperfectly described, and under the similitude of nature after a storm:

SONNET.

"Heaviness may abide for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Last night, despondingly, I watched the rain
Assail the roof with cold and sullen beat,
Like heavy tramping of impatient feet—
I heard the willow and the elm complain—
The northern pine-tree hugged himself in vain,
For all athrough his branches poured the aleet,

An armed battalion in continuous sheet.
 The morning shamed the night with proud
 disdain,
 The lowliest shrub some queenly honor bore—
 The mullen-stalk glowed sapphire—golden
 gleamed
 The long rough plantain—and the clover stood
 Opal and ruby—while the pine wore
 Its coronal of pearl—and baldrics streamed
 Like rainbows o'er the distant hill and wood.

Thus I beheld all nature transfigured after
 the storm: what was called a frost became a
 sea of gems to me. Mrs. Brown called and
 said, "Did you see, ma'am, how nice the frost
 looked on the trees this morning, for all the
 world like great chandeliers?" A touch of
 the poetic, but wofully confused with millinery and
 candle-light.

December 25.—To the surprise of Tom, who
 had become accustomed to my disconsolate face,
 I made our Christmas preparations with even
 more than ordinary zest: but I did not invite
 my wealthy friends with their children, only,
 I sent for the poorest also, and had a great com-
 fortable table spread for them. Despite our
 love of fine manners, we did not heed the un-
 couth ways of the little fat boys and girls, who
 shoveled in their food with a knife, and ate one
 mouthful and then drank, a mouthful of food
 and a drink, washing down their meat and
 bread with little or no use of the teeth.

MEX.—I think our school teachers ought to
 devote a half day of each week in teaching
 children the proprieties of manner. They
 might even go through with a Barmecide feast,
 and like the small servant in the Old Curiosity
 Shop of Dickens, "make believe eat, and be
 company." Thus they would learn to chew
 their food; to abstain from too much drinking;
 learn the use of the napkin, and all the courtes-
 ies of a courteous life. The more I think of
 it, the more I am convinced that this would be
 good school exercise.

December 26.—Since I have been a wife and
 mother, I have felt the need of continuous study
 and reading that I may be a desirable compan-
 ion to my husband, and a wise and intelligent
 counselor to my children, hence I have studied
 the best modes of education, and find the
 Society of Jesus, whatever may have been, or
 may be their faults in moral point of view,
 most admirable and efficient teachers or educa-
 tors in the broadest sense.

The College is a discipline of manners no less
 than intellect. Every day a Critic is appointed,

whose duty it is to observe at the table and
 elsewhere any solecism in the routine of polite
 life, and thus it is that these men are so thor-
 oughly well bred in manner and so wise and
 capable as educators.

I was reading an old copy of Erasmus lately,
 and surely I felt the great masses have wonder-
 fully improved since any state of society would
 justify his strictures. I do not know as educa-
 tion, I mean education of the whole nature of
 man, intellectual, physical, and most especially
 moral, will make a child of ill blood over; but
 I do believe it is like a new creation to him,
 sending the nutriment of the brain into the
 best channels, weakening the lower passions,
 and even elevating them to that degree that
 they warm up, stimulate and quicken the higher
 sensibilities, and what might have been simply
 brutal may be made heroic.

"What are you writing so long in your jour-
 nal to-night, Kitty," cried Tom, who had
 wakened from his first nap.

"You know, dear, that when I want to fix a
 subject of thought strongly in my mind, I have
 to write it out. An indistinct idea becomes
 wonderfully clear and effective, being compelled
 to stand out in black and white; and I am
 thinking Tom, that you and I might be so
 trained and educated as to become nearly
 perfect."

"You are that, already, Kitty; but I was not
 caught early enough. You must try to be con-
 tent with your bad boy."

"Now, Tom, you know I do not like you to
 talk nonsense to me. I like to have you praise
 and flatter me and all that, but when you talk
 as if you did not quite come up to the mark of
 a perfect man, as the world goes, you do not
 mean one word that you say. You know you
 think, and every man living thinks, that all
 that a woman does or thinks is very well for a
 woman; but, never in one of your heads do
 you think, that any woman ever was or will be
 equal to a man. Some women you think are
 superior to some men, but never a woman was,
 or will be equal to men as men. You know it,
 Tom."

Then he said, "You look very handsome,
 Kitty, when you are so in earnest;" whereat
 I pouted, and said I should be glad when my
 beauty was all gone, that he might learn to
 admire my mind, and Tom gave a long whistle
 and said: "Tell that to the marines!"

"Now tell me if I do not tell the truth in
 what I say."

"Oh! Kitty, it is such a great subject, and I
 am so sleepy!"

"No, you shall not go to sleep, you lazy, arrogant one. You think, and so does Huxley, and all other grandgrinds, that because you have great bones and muscles, and are taller and stronger than we are, that you must be superior—why the ox can beat you at that game; and then you put a measure round your heads and ours, and because yours is the largest you say you are made nobler than we, forgetting that fineness is better than bulk, that a delicate fiber produces the best fabric. Why, Tom, you provoke me into becoming a strong-minded, woman's rights woman."

"Now, Heaven forefend! Kitty, if you threaten that I will admit all you claim and a great deal more to keep you still. Indeed, dear, you are talking books at me; for I have always said you were a great deal wiser and better than I am."

"That is only because you love me, and I am your wife, but you do not for one moment think I should make as good a judge as you will, or that any woman ever could."

"You hit the nail on the head," cried Tom, stopping my mouth with kisses, and I saw I was on the verge of quarrelling with him upon an abstract question, so I only cried,

"Oh! the conceit and the arrogance of the masculine brain. Oh! the blindness and stupidity of the masculine mind!"

January 1.—We had quite a number of callers to-day, and every body told me I was looking quite charmingly, which I was willing to believe, for my health is excellent, and I desired to make the visits of our guests a pleasant one by an effort to be agreeable. Rachel staid in the room, and really was a very graceful, unaffected little lady. David and Paul made several calls and had an air of grave importance rather amusing than otherwise. Paul most especially seemed to feel as if the fate of an empire depended upon the way in which he should acquit himself. In discussing the experience of the day, he asked David if he did not think Lucy Ney a very pretty girl?

"You did, Paul, because she kissed you. She did not offer to do it to a boy of my size," whereat Paul was abashed and ashamed at his youngness, and David pulled up his gloves with the air of a veteran man of the world, turning to Rachel with a sneer, which did not much trouble me, for we are such composite beings that in the growing child sometimes one and sometimes another group of faculties start into activity and produce a temporary one-sidedness, so I said nothing but listened.

"I suppose, Rachel, you had lots of kisses to-day, and was glad to get them?"

The child reddened, for she is desirous of the approval of her brother, but replied gently,

"No, David, several old gentlemen kissed me, and one young one kissed my hand, but the boys didn't."

"That is right, Rachel; I don't want any body slobbering over my sister's face, and boasting about it afterwards."

"Why, David, slobbering is not a nice word in that connection; and besides, no gentleman, young or old, will ever boast of having kissed a lady, and if the boys talk in that way you must go away and say you can not hear such talk," I replied.

Paul approached me with round, open eyes: "Jim Pynchon told me he kissed Minnie Grey every day when they went to school, and she set her lunch-box down to hug him."

Here is a case! Minnie is five years old, and Jim six! Still I told my little ones that if Jim did not have gentlemanly ideas when he was little he would never have them, and David declared that if he thought Rachel would hug and kiss the school-boys, he would flog every one of them and her too. "It isn't nice, mamma."

Dear me! the children are wondrously precocious in this age, and my young David begins to dictate like a little king. After all the world gives one system of thought after another on airing, and then out-grows it, and I suppose the crude manner in which the truly great question of Women's Rights is handled, will give rise to a counterpart of crudities in the other sex, till eventually the race will overstep it all, and rise to something better, or fall back into some hopeless muddle. The pretensions of our sex already give rise to greater assumptions on the part of the other, and the boys affect the airs of their fathers.

The old system, a sort of division of labor by which men ruled the State, and woman her little Empire of Home, there training the future Ruler to sobriety, the government of his passions and the practice of justice and integrity, seems to me very beautiful, and I never in the rank in which I was bred saw women unduly coerced or oppressed. She was free to elect her course in life, and if circumstances rendered it desirable to enlarge her sphere of action, she did so with little or no hindrance; but what was well in a cultured class, might not be well in a ruder one, and therefore a protest grew to be inevitable; but, I see no occasion for this uprooting of society as women seem

now disposed to do, and the world will be the worse for it, for the household will disappear.

January 8.—Tom has had an attack of nervous headache, and has dowered about the house all day; sometimes stalking about the room with his shoulders hunched up and hands in his dressing-gown pockets, and whistling, not very well, and then punching the grate, and then over-hauling my work basket. A man is a miserable creature when sick, and makes an awful fuss over trifles. I watched him awhile, and then I took off my linen apron, for I had been helping the cook, and seated myself in my big chair, and called:

"Dear heart! come here, be a good boy, and let me magnetize your poor head," and he put his head in my lap, while I rubbed it gently, and he was soon fast asleep. I did not stir for more than an hour, and he awoke quite cured.

"Oh! Kitty, there is nothing so soothing as a gentle woman's gentle touch. I am thinking, dear, in the new order of things which women are intent upon organising, this will be a far less comfortable world; and we poor fellows, who will always, after all that has been said and done, be compelled to brunt the fight, will miss that tenderness and that sweet favor in fair women's eyes, which was the best guerdon of the brave soldier after a hard contested field."

"You think, dear, that women are growing mannish, instead of enlarged and noble? that there will be no calm, observant element left in the world; you think as this observant does, free from the turmoil of State, you might, by a superior candor and intelligence, allay the animosities of party, and subdue by the humanizing Christian graces?"

"Kitty, dear, I always have said you are a Socrates in petticoats, and I grow every day into a deeper respect for your judgment and opinions."

"If the majorities of women had had the good chance that Kitty has had, perhaps you would respect more of us, Tom."

"No, the majorities of women have had as good a chance as the majorities of men. If women have borne children, men have fed them, and the hindrances of life have been mutual; but my head is aching too bad for talk. Let me read your journal, darling, and here is Hannah with wide-open eyes—I'll warrant the cake has burned, or your poultry have picked the pie set out to cool; or the pig has broken bounds; or the cat has lopped up the cream; or Rachel tumbled out of the swing, and Kitty

Howard is in demand in all emergencies. She is a model wife!"

IS THERE ANY DANGER in being shaved by a barber with a razor that is used in common? Yes. Many cases of barber's itch have come before our notice, propagated in this way, and a London medical journal makes this statement: "Recently we have professionally seen two of the worst cases of *Sycosis contagiosa* which have ever come under our notice. Both patients were shaved by the same barber, and no doubt with the same razor as that used—for the barber acknowledged his fault—in shaving a man "with a bad chin." In one patient the yellowish scales have extended to the upper lip, and sides of the face covered by hair.

The vegetable nature of the disease and the rapidity with which the seeds are transmitted from part to part, until the cryptogamic plant surrounds every hair follicle, is only too well known for repetition here. Our chief object in directing public attention to a most serious matter is that barbers will learn through us to be more careful in indiscriminate shaving, and that the public seeking their aid will, for their own sake, insist upon what we hope will now become a universal practice in the barber-shop, namely, the razor to be immersed in some warm water before being applied to the face. This is pretty sure to destroy the vegetable organism, should any exist, on the instrument. Those who may have suffered from the *Sycosis contagiosa*, and the physician who has had experience in the treatment of it alone know the protracted nature of a most unsightly complaint in yielding to treatment, and the value of the hint we offer in the simple immersion of the razor in warm water, and then wiped before use.

Indeed, in the filthy barber-shops of our great towns diseases of more kinds than *Sycosis* are propagated, but with that we do not purpose entering upon now. Our simple desire has been to record a painful occurrence with which we have recently met—a faithful corroboration of the testimony of Gustav Simon, of Gruby, of Vienna, and of the experiments made by Fc-ville, who noted over and over again the transmission, by contagion, of *Sycosis* from the use of a razor employed in shaving an affected person.

BAD HABITS are the thistles of the heart, and every indulgence of them is a seed from which will spring a new crop of weeds.

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