

Kitty Howard's Journal.—No. XI.

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FEB. 1.—My secret weighs upon me, and the more I think upon it the more I doubt if I have done the right thing in the matter of George's death. Openness and candor are so essential to me that I begin to feel isolated in not sharing all my thoughts with Tom. I seem to have lost a part of the sweetness of our companionship, and when my husband looks in my face with his clear, loving eyes I feel my lids drop, as if they were learning to cover a secret. Shame! I am not happy.

FEB. 2.—It has often happened that Tom and I are thinking the same thoughts and speak the same words, and when we do this I make him look his little finger into mine and make a wish—and then pronounce the name of some poet, and we shall have our wish. Tom always says Shakespeare, and I Milton, and the best of it is to laugh we get up on the occasion, and the pinch Tom gives my cheek, and the way he calls me a goose and I call him a bear, and the children clap their hands and shout! We are spooneys, without any doubt.

More than all this, we often dream the same dream, Tom and I do. Sometimes Tom, I think, goes off into a strong sleep and leaves me to finish out his dream. Several times lately when we have dreamed together, sometimes odd and laughable dreams, sometimes solemn, beautiful dreams, Tom has waked me up and with some anxiety questioned me, and has said more than once, "Balm, my precious child, are you quite well? Did you dream of walking by a lovely river just now, and did you pick up a pearl?"

"Yes, Tom, but it turned black in my hands."

"O Balm! I saw it turn black—what does it mean? and, Kitty dear, there is a filmy cloud between us, go where we will."

"My dear Tom, my best friend, Kitty is filling your head with weak fancies. Go to sleep, dear," and I patted his cheek till he slept.

FEB. 4.—I ought to have before recorded that Tom and I do not approve of dressing in black when a friend goes to the spirit world, but as Jane was desirous to appear in full widow's weeds, Tom was careful to gratify her to the extent of her wishes, although our expenses are now so great that we feel much embarrassed; and the expense of such mourning as she required was pretty considerable. Jane is look-

ing very pretty, and goes out a great deal; her widow's cap is really very becoming, and she does give an uncommonly coquettish sweep to her heavy crape veil! In church she looks as demure as a kitten!

FEB. 5.—Such a poor, uncomfortable time as I have had to-day! all because of the mice! I do not wonder we women are petty, and magnify trifles, for we have to deal largely with them. I am very nice about my wardrobe and bureau, and like to have them in perfect order, with a soft odor of rose and lavender. I learned to like good old Isaac Walton because he speaks of "lavendered sheets," it came in so pat with my own housewifely ways. Last night, upon opening one of the drawers, an indefinable odor of "mouse" assailed me, and there was a gleam of little bead-like eyes, and a perfect streak of tails. I shut down the drawer without a word, for it would have been in bad taste to vex Tom with such an annoyance, at that hour. However, this morning I consulted him as to the best means of ridding myself of them.

"Why, Kitty, dear, catch them by the tails and drown them," he answered, in perfect soberness.

"Catch them, Tom! I should like to see you do it."

"I will after Court hours, dear," he replied, and kissing us all, went out.

Now, there is a helpful man in the matter of mice!

I went out to the druggist's, and laid the matter before him, and he having recommended strychnine as a condiment to bread and butter, by way of mousey delectation, I followed his advice, and placed a saucer with the preparation in the bureau drawer. Before night there were two large mice and five innocents, all in one interesting group. I am sure this is the kindest of all ways to kill them, seeing they are not to be tolerated.

MARCH 6.—To-day Jane (who, by the way, is causing me much trouble), said to me, "Kitty, I need money terribly; what can I do? I do not like to ask Mamma Howard, for I know she hates me—the proud, tyrannical creature that she is."

"You are to blame, Jane," I replied, "to say

it, for you have had nothing but kindness and generosity from her."

"There, that's enough. She hates me, and I her. George might have got his life insured, and then I should have had something to live on, and not have to be dependent on his friends for my daily bread; but he never saw an inch beyond his nose."

"Jane, Jane, this is horrible," I said. "How can you speak in such a way of poor, dear George, who was so gentle and good!"

Never did I behold any thing at the theater or opera so grand, so noble, so almost tragic as the air of Madam Howard as she arose and approached us. She had been seated in the shade of the window curtain, and neither of us had known it. She confronted Jane with a stern, indignant face, which quelled even her with all her hardihood, and she actually turned pale and bit her lips.

"Jane, you never loved my son. You are incapable of loving any human creature. You are one mass of selfishness, deceit, and ungovernable self-will. You have been the ruin of George!"

This from Mamma Howard, whose voice faltered as she pronounced the name of her son. Jane bit her nails and under lip in silence, and Mamma went on:

"Jane, had as it is—sad as was my poor boy's history with you, I am glad to know he never loved such a thing as you are."

Jane sprang from her chair and stamped her feet with rage; all her pretended courtesy and affected airs of *nonchalance* disappeared before the honest truth so unpalatably spoken, and she fairly screamed, "How dare you say that? how dare you say it?"

"Because it is the solemn truth, and you know it. You had entangled him by your arts, you ensnared him, and then held him to his rash, foolish proposal, although he told you solemnly that he had been misled, and by your own tricks and familiarity; that he did not love you, and yet you were so base, so unwomanly as to hold him, notwithstanding all this, to his promise."

Jane nearly foamed at the mouth with rage. She grew livid in color, and trembled from head to foot. Detected in her vile arts, which we had partially known, but which George in his distress and utter despair had revealed to his mother, she dared not speak, but never did I see a human creature who so much made me think of a viper. At length she broke loose, and showered a torrent of curses upon the head of Mamma, who simply replied, in a low, calm voice:

"This is foolish, very foolish, if it were so bad; but remember, Jane, that curses are like chickens, they always come home to roost."

At this Jane went through with some abject manipulations, and cried out, "You don't send me there; I have fixed them on your head, and there they will be."

All this is so foreign to our true life, so discordant and wicked that I burst into tears, and felt as if we were all doomed to misery. Mamma Howard laid my head upon her shoulder, and soothed me as if I had been a baby. Mamma Howard went on:

"George made you a good husband, Jane. Miserable as you made him, he was forbearing and weakly indulgent to the woman who had made him a father. You did not even love your own child; you do not know how to love any thing. The child died because of your neglect and because your very sphere is deadly."

Jane laughed with scorn, and retorted:

"Well, it is dangerous at your time of life, Madam, to get so excited," and resuming her usual habit of drawing her lace handkerchief through her left hand with her right, and with a look, indescribable in its malignity, out of the corner of her eye, she left the room.

Madam Howard walked several times across the room in silence, her noble face expressive of more pain than anger. At length she said to me:

"Dear Kitty, this has been a scene which you ought not to suffer. I will pay Jan's debt elsewhere. The harmony of a whole household must not be destroyed by one evil spirit; and then with a sad attempt at cheerfulness she quoted, playfully, "You remember the old hymn, which says:

"One scabby sheep infects the flock."

I left Mamma Howard to say what she thought advisable in the case of Jane, and when she returned to dinner he found only his little Kitty doing the best she could to make every body happy. He took Rachel on his knee and stroked her face tenderly, and then he kissed her forehead and called her "little Balm."

MARCH 20.—It is a cold, windy day; one of those days in which children fret without apparent cause; one of those days in which the cat seems to snarle, and the dog to be testy; when the knitting needles click as if they wanted to bite, and the thread will break in the "puckering thread," as Hannah calls it; when the coal snaps, and the door creaks, and the frypan sizzles, and the bread scorches, and all the megrims of household keeping get their tantrums; when the dust eddies

corners, and the last year's leaf goes into fits, twists about and has a general whisk and as in its last extremity. I notice on such the newspapers are gritty and malignant personal, and the neighbors are quarrelsome and throw stones at the chickens, and the break windows.

In short, it has been an uncomfortable day, without apparent reason therefor, except the conditioned wind, which has been intent to into the marrow of the bones, and for what else it would be hard to tell. I think Kitty has been a little irritable, and Mamma Howard, as always wise and thoughtful, desired her to go to bed and rest awhile, which she did, and a good cry in the bargain.

But.—We women cry where men fight. I wonder if the coming woman will be a crying man, or will her stronger development have effect to dry up her tears? Ah me! I find no comfort.

I have been seriously annoyed to find that David and Paul think very much of the creature comforts; they have a natural tendency to this fine and delicate and comfortable, in spite of my efforts to render them more heroic. I have lately proposed that they should sleep in a rough chamber over a back extension room, where there is neither carpet nor elegance of any kind. The boys laughed and declined, but to-night both of them volunteered to sleep there.

They had not been long in bed, and I sat in my room, thinking about them—wondering if my care for them would be like so much water spilled upon the sand, when they came to my room and both looked in my face, with a stern kind of scrutiny, and David asked: "Dear Mamma, why did you not speak to us now?"

"I do not understand you, darlings," I replied.

"Why Mamma, you come and looked down at us so kind, so loving, dear Mamma, and now we said 'kiss us, do kiss us,' you did not do so, but we could not see you after that."

"I did not tell them that I had not been there. I put them back into bed and tucked them, and mothers always feel as if the bed must be tucked up, and kissed them and said good night."

"Oh dear, precious children! My soul must have gone to visit them in its great yearning tenderness. We are nearer spirit than flesh in our best and purest state. This has happened more than once happened to my children, who

have seen me when my body was elsewhere, and it has always been when all the sentiments of my life and soul went forth to them with inexorable love.

MARCH 22.—Jane is boarding with Mrs. Brown and they seem very fond of each other. Jane says Mrs. B. is one of the loveliest of women—so good, so kind and patient, though she suffers every thing in consequence of the ill treatment of her husband. I could hardly refrain from laughing to hear poor Mr. Brown, the meekest of men, and so hen-pecked that he winks every time his wife looks at him, described as such a monster of a man.

I have been very careful never to speak of Jane as she really is. I could not conscientiously praise her, but I considered that our neighbors had nothing to do with our private knowledge of the characters of the members of a family, therefore I have been silent. Not so Jane, who is abusing us all in the most gratuitous manner, and I find that our good simple-minded neighbors are looking askance at us, and talk of poor little Kitty as if she were a perfect ogre. More than all this Harriet has greatly changed for the worse under the influence of Jane.

To-day the robins have come back to examine the old nest, and gave me snatches of song that made my heart leap with joy. I found in warm nooks, also, the blossoms of the May flower (Trailing arbutus) in the woods, and the red berries of the wintergreen beamed from the brown earth like rubies. I stood in the warm light, my back to the sun, and there was not a cloud, nothing but blue, blue sky—a vast, tranquil dome, whose peace entered my heart.

Mamma Howard is such a comfort to us. She talks of opening her house, and of course she will leave us, but I esteem it an honor and a privilege to have her in our household—she so handsome, always so tastefully dressed, so wise, with every hour something to say which the memory will preserve when the words of others are spoken and forgotten; so gravely tender, forbearing to speak when another would retort, and always with some beautiful word or look of kindness. The children certainly stand in some awe of her, which I am glad to see, and which has a fine influence in the household, but they carry to her their best sayings, their best dress and cleanest faces, for they seem to think they must give themselves an extra scrub to please Mamma Howard. I think they value her approval more than mine.

MEM.—To endeavor to keep myself fresh and young—more in thought and feeling than in

person, for I find in all the books, if a man falls into bad ways he is reclaimed by some memory of his poor *old mother*. I wonder if he would be so likely to fall into bad ways if his mother were true and noble, and brave, something to be admired and loved more than pitied by her children. To consider this point, and talk it over with Tom, and square myself in the matter as best I can.

MARCH 23.—Found Rachel with the scissors very busy cutting off her curly, golden hair. She had cut it off snug to the skin across the forehead, and notched it in and out frightfully. I was downright angry, and slapped her fat little hands sharply. Mamma Howard gave me a gentle pat on the shoulder, without speaking, and brought me to my senses. I find I have too much pride in my children's beauty; and now Rachel looks bad enough to cure me of it, at least for awhile.

No sooner was my back turned than David and Paul were kissing her wounded hand with pitiful looks, and David certainly wasted an angry one upon my back.

MARCH 24.—Mrs. Brown and Jane made a formal call, and Mrs. Brown whispered, "Jane is not so wise as you seem to be, Mrs. Howard; how could she be when she is all simplicity and tenderness, a sort of angel, in fact! You can not imagine what a comfort she is to me. You know something of my trials—Mr. Brown—well she stands by me, as women should stand by each other. Jane and I take such nice walks; we see a great deal of company outside, for Brown looks so glum that I hate to ask people home.

"I'm afraid this is not quite well, Mrs. Brown," muttered poor little Kitty, who can not help seeing the moral bearing of things of this kind, but just then Jane says, "Come here, Kitty, I want to speak to you about my new dress," and I hurried across the room to put a stop to the destruction of my fuschia, which she was pulling to pieces with the fingers of one hand, while she bit the nails of the other. I observed that she had a beautiful diamond ring on her finger. Her hands are very white, much whiter than mine, but they are thin and bony, while mine are plump. Now if there is any thing that I covet it is a white hand, from my fancy having been exercised in reading Ossian, perhaps, when I was a growing girl, and he tells so much about "white-handed" beauties, as do all the novelists, while most of hands in persons who are in good health, with plenty of air and exercise are very far from being white.

Jane did not utter a word about her dress, relieved herself by saying, "Mrs. Brown will be the death of me! Such a cross-grained, vulgar creature! Don't we give poor Brown a headache? That is all the fun I have. Kitty, can't you take me back again?"

I shook my head, for I am not clever in seeing double-faced people. While I was talking with our guests, Harriet suffered the punishment to burn quite black. I do wish people would make evening calls, it would be so much more convenient for housekeepers, when the work is all done and the children safe in bed.

THE CURE FOR PAUPERISM.—The Tribune, in a recent article on the prevention of pauperism says: "A radical defect in all attempts at improving the condition of the poor of this city is to be found in the fact, that we have hitherto provided charities, which can only be accepted by the very base or very unfortunate classes of community. There has been no endeavor to provide workingmen with homes where they can live in comfort for a reasonable rent and in this way prevent well-disposed people from becoming bad. What we need are great public benefactions which shall not be charities. In this country we have one peculiar illustration in point—that of a widespread and serious communion, in which poverty and charity are alike unknown. The German Baptists and Dunkers, as they are usually called, together with the Mennonites and other sects which singular tenets, embrace a membership of 100,000 people, in Pennsylvania and the West, and in this whole body, there is scarcely a head of a family not possessed of a competency. They are a people not addicted to the giving of alms; the younger men have the use of the capital, the elders, not as a gift, but as a loan, and frugality and industry grow rich as they grow old. The same results might be expected to follow, in a measure at least, if we should provide cheap homes for our laboring poor. They would be encouraged, while happiness and education and morality were promoted, and it would be to the advantage of the citizen who also prove a gain to the city."

FEEDING HORSES.—For a saddle or coach horse, half a peck of sound oats and eighteen pounds of good hay is sufficient; if the hay is not good add a quarter of a peck of oats. A horse which works harder may take rather more of each; one that works less should have less.