

THE LENOIR TOPIC.

DEVOTED TO THE GENERAL INTERESTS OF CALDWELL, WATAUGA, ASHE AND ADJACENT COUNTIES.

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MAIDENHOOD.

BY ANNIE E. ANMAN.

What happy star shone on her birth?
What grassy corner of the earth
Grew daisies for her baby feet
To dance between, since they pass,
On all the flowerless ways they tread,
That breezy motion of the grass?
What brook bewitched her to its brink,
And drew her fresh lips down to drink
Its music, while it slipped unseen
Its happy cadences between?
So sweet and glad the voice that slips
From ambush of her maiden lips.
What winds upon the hills gave room
To her, and buffeted to bloom
Her rounded cheeks, and made her hair
A flying sunshine in the air?
For still, like sun-gleams on a rose,
Her wayward color comes and goes.
What graybeard tree upon the down
Caught, as she sped, her floating gown,
And whispered through his ancient girth
The long dumb sorrow of the earth?
For the sweet pity in her eyes
Almost their gladness overles.

—Scribner's Monthly.

The Box of Honey.

BY "BECCO."

Mrs. H. seated herself hastily at the table. Her right hand rested firmly upon the handle of the tea-pot, a position plainly indicating to Mr. H. that the customary blessing must be cut short. Conspicuous among the neat fixings of a well-ordered tea-table were the steaming hot biscuit and a plate of "that delicious honey" from their own hive among the clover blossoms in their garden.

The "olive branches" were not there. They never had been—therefore, order, neatness, precision governed the minutest details of the domestic economy.

Domestic peace requires its sacrifices and chief of this is quiet acquiescence. Mr. H. had learned this also, and for its sake, though sometimes "riled" and nettled, he acquiesced.

In this instance he snapped off the "truly thankful" with one hand on the butter plate, giving evidence that there should be no unnecessary delay on his part.

"Do you remark," said Mrs. H., with a honied accent, "how beautiful that honey is? Notice the liquid transparency of the comb!—and the honey!—is translucent as a liquid pearl! I never saw anything so lovely! How thankful we ought to be to know that we are privileged to live in a world where even the stinging insects are made to minister to the delicacy of our most exquisite taste. We must take a box of that honey with us to-morrow to our friends in Boston. They will be so delighted to receive a box of 'our own honey, from our own hive in the garden,' won't they dear?"

"Likely. But how are we to carry it?"

"Carry it?" "I, am not to carry it. You are to carry it."

"Not if I know myself. I'd like to see myself lugging a box of honey all the way to Boston."

"But you will though—pity if I can't have my own way once in a while!"

"Once in a while," muttered Mr. H., making a deadly thrust at the butter and adding something that sounded very much like "dang the honey," or words to that effect.

However, next morning a small box of honey neatly wrapped in a copy of the Baptist Register might have been seen beside the satchel on the hall table. The trunk had been sent down to the "Jenny Lind," a small packet that took passengers as far as Rochester to connect with the cars, and Mrs. H. remarked:

"You'll take the honey and I'll take the satchel."

"I'll have nothing more to do with it."

"Don't forget the honey," he heard her call back from the gate as she walked off with the satchel, and soon reentered around the corner. Picking up the box he followed muttering all sorts of incoherent adjectives about woman's whims and nonsense.

The monotony of the packet trip was varied by the usual games of checkers and back-gamon in one end of the cabin, while in the other a strolling musician was tipping a round-keyed melodeon back and forth on his knees, and singing:

Oh, how happy is the man who has chosen wisdom's way
And measured out his span with the partner of his days;
With his God and his Bible he knows that he's not alone,
His declining days are sweeter, yes, than honey in the comb.

About this time one of the attentive listeners might have been seen tucking a small package under the end of a settee, and whispering:

"There! The 'darn' stuff's out of sight now, anyhow, and there it'll stay for all me!"

Arriving in Rochester Mr. H. meditated till everybody had left the boat, then he took up the box, then he put it

down again; then he shook his fist at it—then he picked it up and followed his wife to the cars, in which they were soon seated, the satchel stowed away under their feet and the honey put up in the rack.

Mr. H. resigned himself to reading the "Reveries of a Bachelor," and Mrs. H. to sweet dreams of her friends in Boston and the exquisite pleasure it would give her to present the nice little "box of honey from their own hive among the clover blossoms."

"What is that?" exclaimed Mrs. H., starting up with surprise, as she heard something drop down among the rose-buds on her bonnet, and looking up saw another pearly pendant about to descend on the same spot. "Good Lord! What have you been doing? My hat is ruined!" Hereupon Mr. H. seeing his opportunity to rid himself of the incubus, seized the obnoxious sweetener and was about to hurl it from the car window, when a passenger came to the rescue with sympathy and newspaper. The box was thoroughly "done up" and Mr. H. was reluctantly impressed to rest it upon his knees until their arrival in Utica, when, placing it again in the rack, they took up their satchel and passed out for refreshments.

"We'll go to Bagg's Hotel and get a nice dinner for fifty cents," said Mr. H.

"No. I don't give fifty cents for a dinner when I can get as good as I want for twenty-five," said Mrs. H., pointing to a placard that dangled on a string from the window of a restaurant. "That's the way with you men—always squandering your money, while your poor wives have to stay at home and drudge from morning till night."

"That settles it," said Mr. H., swinging his hand savagely at a mistletoe of files as he took a chair opposite his beloved in one of the side stalls in the "Eating House."

"Pork and beans—roast beef—mutton stew!" said the waiter, knocking over a vinegar cruet in a spasmodic slap at the files.

"Pork and beans, or anything!" said Mrs. H., loosening her bonnet strings, "and please to hurry, for we've left a box of honey on the cars, and we should be in an awful bad—"

"Steel of course," said Mr. H. to the waiter, who stood with a slimy napkin thrown over his shoulder and balancing himself with both hands on the back of his chair.

"Whew! I'm glad I'm out of that dirty hole! I didn't enjoy my dinner a bit. I knew I shouldn't, for I was thinking all the time about that honey," said Mrs. H., as they were about taking their seats in the car.

"And where is the honey?" said Mr. H., looking up to the rack.

"Gone! sure as I am alive!" gasped Mrs. H., falling back in the seat. "Somebody's stole it. Where's the conductor?"

"What is the matter?" said the conductor, stepping forward.

"Matter? Where's our honey? We left it up there in the rack while we were out to dinner. We're taking that honey to our friends in Boston, and you had better find it, or there'll be trouble."

"Well I'm very sorry, indeed," said the conductor, "but the fact is, the car you came in was switched off at Utica. The best thing you can do now is to telegraph back from Albany and have it forwarded to Boston by express."

"I told you just how it would be if you left it in that rack—all your own carelessness. And there's my bonnet! Oh, it's enough to provoke a saint!" Then, relapsing into that peaceful condition of unconsciousness that follows mental exhaustion, she remained undisturbed until their arrival in Albany, when Mr. H. rushed in great haste to the telegraph office, and, after cautioning the operator against making any mistake, dictated the following message:

"Well you see, my wife and I we started from Brockport to go down to Boston with a box of honey to give to our friends there, for my wife says they don't have any such honey, besides she wanted to make them a present, so she thought we'd better take a box. I did my best not to have her take it, for I knew it would make us more trouble and expense than 'twas worth, but she's bound to have her own way, so for the sake of peace I just brought it along and it was left in the car that was switched off at Utica, and we want to have it sent to Boston by express."

"All right," said the operator, "your message has gone forward just as you stated it," figuring up the bill—"fifty cents for the first ten words and three cents for each additional word is—\$3.80," said the operator, leaning his chin upon his hands and looking blandly into the distracted countenance of his customer.

"What! \$3.80 for that short letter?"

"I didn't s'pose 'twould cost ten cents!"

"That's the charge," said the opera-

tor, rapping nervously upon the desk with the end of his pencil as if to expedite payment.

There are moments in life when the spirit receives whole volumes of thought on its unwritten leaves.

And this was one of them to Mr. H., as with each particular hair standing on an end, and struggling with emotions of indignation inexpressible, he planked down the dust and repaired to the depot just in time to see the train depart without him, and Mrs. H. running up and down the platform crying they had carried off her satchel.

"Glad of it," said Mr. H., "and I wish they'd carried you of with it—all this 'dangled' trouble and expense for a box of honey that you could buy anywhere for a dollar!"

"It's your own fault. You had no business to leave it in the car; and here we've got to wait four hours in this nasty depot for the next train."

They waited in silence those four weary hours, then they journeyed on to Boston without further incident, found their satchel and their friends, exchanged the customary greetings, and were happy.

It was three miles by horse cars to the express office, the day was hot, and Mr. H. was lost in the narrow and entangled streets, but he found the office at last, only to be told the honey had not arrived. The second day he received the same melancholy report, but on the third the expressman rejoiced his heart with the welcome words, "Your honey has come," and reaching up to a shelf he handed down a large platter, saying:

"We were obliged to purchase this platter, as the shaking of the car and the hot weather were too much for it. Express charges, two dollars, platter, one dollar fifty, is three-fifty."

There are moments in every man's life when all the forces of his moral nature are loudly called for, and this was one of them to Mr. H., in which he demonstrated his complete mastery over the baser instincts of his nature, by liquidating the bill without a murmur, and with that Christian resignation that "hopeth all things and endureth all things," he picked up the platter, walked a rod or two along the sidewalk, and then giving it a sling saw it break into a hundred pieces in the middle of the street.

"Did you throw that platter of honey in the public thoroughfare?" said a policeman tapping him gently upon the shoulder.

"Yes I did, and I'm 'dangled' if I wouldn't throw it there if it had been a barrel! You see my wife and I we started from Brockport—"

"Five dollars fine for throwing anything of that character in the public highway, so fork over, or accompany me to the station house."

There was a momentary pause, during which the "Recollections of a Busy Life" swam before his eyes in a sea of honey, and a heavenly smile played around his features as he planked down the last instalment that honor, love, and exacting custom could claim of its most consistent worshipper.

Mental Food.

Good bread is the staff of life, and if we lean on that we grow strong and healthy. If we bring up our children on plain, wholesome diet, they grow tall, erect, strong and healthy. But if we feed them on rich cake and pastry, and fill their stomachs with all sorts of trash, spiced up to tempt the appetite beyond what nature requires, their appetites become depraved, and they loathe the food best calculated to make them grow healthy and strong; and, in consequence, they grow pale, poor, puny and weak. Just so with the mind. Our minds ought to become clear and strong, enlightened and elevated. There is food that is healthy and nutritious for the mind. But the literary cooks have served the public with so much highly seasoned food that the tastes of their readers, especially of the young, have become vitiated, and they turn with disgust from good, solid, instructive reading, which would improve their mental powers, and make them intellectually strong, and help them to become useful members of society. But they eagerly devour literary pastry, if highly spiced. They crave sensational reading; romance and fiction; pathetic, comic and tragic. And this exciting reading, so stimulating to the brain, is tempting, and they read too much. The consequence is, their minds become dwarfed and sickly. They gain no real knowledge, but the brain is weakened and the memory ruined, and the intellectual vigor destroyed; and these mental dyspeptics are about as unfit to grapple with the stern realities of life as a worn out, haggard, physical dyspeptic is to endure the hardships of a soldier's life in a campaign against the Modocs.

Peanuts.

Peanuts, or as they are popularly known in the South, groundnuts or goubers, grow in the ground on the roots of the plant just like potatoes. The stalks and leaves of the plant somewhat resemble clover, and to get the nuts when ripe, the plants are pulled out of the ground, the nuts adhering firmly to the roots. The greatest trouble with the groundnuts is in picking them, which has to be done by hand, no machine having as yet been invented to do the work, though it would seem as if such a machine, in the shape of a coarse comb, might be easily invented. But labor is cheap in the places where they are grown, which are in the light sandy soil of Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina, in this country. Peanuts are also largely grown in Africa, India, Brazil and other places. The best are raised in the valley of the River Gambia, in Africa, and yield large quantities of oil. This product, when largely produced, is esteemed equal to olive oil; but it is also used in woolen manufactures, in soap making, in lamps, and for lubricating machinery. Last year the crop in the United States was as follows: Tennessee 235,000 bushels; Virginia, 450,000; North Carolina 100,000. The imports from Africa last year were 846,000 bushels of which Boston imported 38,000, and New York 23,000. The average of the new crop this year is somewhat larger than that of last year, and the yield promises well, the nut being generally better filled and matured for the past two years, and of finer quality. The past year was marked by fewer changes than any former one; by a moderate but steady consumptive demand; by an absence of speculation; and by the small proportion of choice white nuts. Tennessee peanuts are put up in burlap bags of four or five bushels capacity, and are sold by the pound, the grades being, respectively, inferior, prime, choice, fancy. The crop year begins October 1st, and ends September 30 of the ensuing year. The new crop will come forward under very favorable auspices. The previous crop having been well sold up, stocks are light in the hands of commission merchants and dealers.

The Magnitude of Riches.

I can well believe the familiar story of Jacob Astor's saying that "a man who is worth \$250,000 is just as well off as if he was rich." The mind easily becomes habituated to these new magnitudes. Thomas Brassey, the English railroad contractor, had at one time 80,000 men in his employ, whose wages came to about \$500,000 a week, and they were at work in seven countries—England, France, Spain, Italy, Venezuela, Canada, and Australia. He wrote a note one day ordering 10,000 wheelbarrows, and 3,000 wagons. In the course of forty years he constructed, or helped to construct, 150 railroads, and he did all this with less fuss than many a man experienced in running a peanut-stand. We have a greater than Thomas Brassey in Cornelius Vanderbilt, who, at eighty, quietly made up his mind that the time had come for us to have a four-track railroad between New York and Buffalo. Some one said to him, "I don't know of any four-track railroads." "I don't," said he, "but the Central must have two more tracks, and I hope to live to see them laid," and probably he will. The care of an estate of \$40,000,000 and the management of all his railroads occupy only two hours a day, and during that short time he does not appear to be very busy. By three o'clock he is usually on the road, erect, magnificent, driving a pair of fast horses, in an open buggy, unattended. And now the question occurs: Who are these uncrowned monarchs of the modern world? What are they? Where do they originate? By what means do they accumulate all these great resources? In what respect do they differ from the men who attempt a similar career and fall out of the course disabled and defeated? Is it their virtue or their want of virtue that gives the success? These are interesting questions, because these men are the masters of our modern world. They carry the purse, and pay everybody, and it is apparently a law of nature that the hand which signs the check wields the power. As a rule, these kings of business begin life near the bottom of what is called the social scale. They generally begin very poor. Crabb Robinson records that the late Lord Southampton applied to the bishop of Landaff for advice how to bring up his son so that he would get forward in the world. "I know but one way," replied the bishop. "Give him parts and poverty." "Well, then," said the father, who was noted for his free living, "if God has given him parts I will manage as to the poverty." Another English nobleman, Lord Derby, mentioned a curious circumstance in point. At a gathering in Australia, four people met, three of whom were shepherds on a sheep farm. One of these had taken a degree at Oxford, another at Cam-

bridge, and the third at a German university. The fourth was their employer, a squatter, rich in flocks and herds, but scarcely able to read and write, much less to keep his own accounts. But I venture to say that the squatter knew sheep, knew land, knew markets, knew wool. It is an unquestionable fact that in Australia and America these founders of huge business are, as a rule, unlettered men, whose college was a rough, hard, grapple with material things. It is also true that they take hold very early in life of some plain work that lies under their very noses, and keep to that until it issues into something large and magnificent. The wealthiest and most powerful house of business in Europe is that of the Rothschilds. The founder of the house, one hundred years ago, was a boy in his father's money-changing office at Frankfurt-on-the-Main. He discovered that some of the coins in which his father had dealt had an artificial value as specimens, and he used to spend the first day of the week—the Jew's idle day—in picking out such coins from the mass for sale to collectors. That was the beginning of his career. He took hold, you will observe, of that work which lay most obviously before him.

A British Boarding-House.

But the interior of the British boarding-house is also worthy of attention. In the first place, it has existed through such a lengthy though unknown period of time! The sojourner from the setting sun has never inquired when the edifice was built; but to his eyes, accustomed to frequent emissions of a ship-plaster architecture, it looks old enough to be fit for pulling down; and he has even a vague, superstitious feeling that its destruction would be an act of mercy, setting free many generations of ghosts which now tenant it, and permitting them to find places of rest. Indeed, if one may venture such a disrespectful statement, the edifice has not borne its years well. There is a looseness and also a clatteringness about its fittings which reminds one of machinery, and sets one to marvelling what unearthly web and wool is being woven by the spirits of the invisible. There is a certain chamber door which rattles to that degree that the occupant frequently shouts "Come in," when nobody is there but a lost breeze which has stumbled into the house by some cranny and is fumbling in all directions to get out again. That occupant proudly believes that nothing in the world can out-rattle his door, except his windows. These last, especially when the wind blows from the southward side, have an agree which transports him with a mixture of admiration and pity. He would cank them up with coats and trousers, only that he has other uses for those articles. Everything within the room corresponds with these symptoms of senility. An antiquarian would fall down and worship before a certain bleared and tottering washstand which has, to all appearance, been in steady use for a matter of five or ten centuries. A shaky, worn-out bedstead, which the Mantagenets may have had the nightmare on, would fill the right kind of a soul with pensive joy. This bedstead, by the way, is so lofty that if the boarder tumbles off it, he will dash himself to atoms on the grimest of carpets. In to the composition of the bedding—the mere, sheer, complex, miscellaneous bedding—there is at least one man who has never dared to explore exhaustively. He knows, however, that it contains not only springs and mattresses, but also feathers. Furthermore, he has noted that what should be a bolster is simply a roll of threadbare blanket, ambuscaded under the sheet. The curtains are of a very venerable fabric, matching in color the grimy exterior of the building. In one corner of the room (and only to be discovered by pulling idiotically at the wall-paper) is a totally improbable closet which smells as though it might have been a locker in Noah's ark, so strong is the perfume of antediluvian bilgewater.—The Atlantic.

Luxury of Fatigue.

It is a great pleasure to get thoroughly tired. The only way to fully enjoy rest and sleep is to get tired first. Many persons have an idea that idleness is pleasure. There can not be a more erroneous notion. Idle persons enjoy nothing. A sense of languor haunts them through the night. Nor, on the other hand, is the highest enjoyment repose. It is the happy combination of mental and bodily labor, requiring recreation for both body and mind, which alone qualifies one for the complete realization of the luxury of the change to rest and sleep. And it is only from such sleep that we awaken greatly strengthened and refreshed.

If infidelity wishes to shake the Christian's faith in a personal God, it must account not for the miracles of the first century merely, but for those of the nineteenth.—Lyman Abbott.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT.

An evergreen—A man who does not learn by experience.
Censure is a tax a man pays to the public for being eminent.
There is in the heart of woman such a deep well of love, that no age can freeze it.—Balzac.
The man who shows that he is vain of having done us a favor pays himself and saves us the trouble.
Flowers are the alphabet of angels, scattered over hills and dales, and speaking what the tongue cannot express.
There is no difference between hatred and pity; pity is a thing often avowed, seldom felt; hatred is a thing often felt, seldom avowed.
The mind has a certain vegetative power, which cannot be wholly idle. If it is not laid out and cultivated into a beautiful garden, it will of itself shoot up weeds or flowers of a wild growth.—Steele.
We may be sure of finding that all periods of life have their compensations. If our existence is a journey we may believe that the part of it which lies nearest to our destination will not be barren of joy.
There is a sanctity in suffering when meekly borne. Our duty, though set about by thorns, may still be made a staff, supporting even while it tortures. Cast it away, and like the prophet's wand, it changes to a snake.—Douglas Jerold.
Observe a method in the distribution of your time. Every hour will then know its proper employment, and no time will be lost. Idleness will be shut out at every avenue, and with her that numerous body of vices that make up her train.
Duty is a power which rises with us in the morning and goes to rest with us at night. It is co-extensive with the action of our intelligence. It is the shadow which cleaves to us, go where we will, and which only leaves us when we leave the light of life.—Gladstone.
There can be no greater blessing than to be born in the light and air of a cheerful, loving home. It not only insures a happy childhood—if there be health and a good constitution—but it also makes sure a virtuous and happy manhood, and a fresh young heart in old age.
Infinite toil would not enable you to sweep away a mist, but by ascending a little you may overlook it altogether. So it is with our moral improvement; we wrestle fiercely with a vicious habit, which would have no hold upon us if we ascended into a higher moral atmosphere.
To rise early is so truly the one thing needful for all who are candidates for three grand prizes—health, wealth, and wisdom—that it is the only sure foundation for securing any chance of obtaining either of them. The sooner you leave your bed, the sooner you will be confined to it.
Resolution which springs from Christian principle, and is fortified by it, is fearless as well as unremitting. It is conclusive of good purposes and the pledge of their being executed effectively. In noble sentiments and worthy deeds. The soul of the resolute is less calm than firm.
With the world it is, the less you ask for the more likely you will be to obtain it, but God's thought are not as our thoughts, with God the more you ask the more likely are you to be heard. Half open your mouth and it may not be filled, but "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."
A good story is told of an old shoemaker. He was charged with practicing unlawful arts as an ague-charmer. "I cure people," said he, "by pretending to do it; people believe I can cure the ague, and when they come to me I say I cure them. Bidding them wait till my return, I go into my garden 'cut a twig of some tree, make nine notches in it and bury it in the garden; then I tell them I have buried the ague with it, and they have such confidence in me that the ague leaves them."
Happiness.—True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise; it arises, in the first place, from the enjoyment of one's self, and in the next, from the friendship and conversation of a few select companions. False happiness loves to be in a crowd, and to draw the eyes of the world upon her. She does not receive any satisfaction from the applause which she gives herself but from the admiration which she raises in others.—Addison.
Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous, half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master that could have taught Shakspeare? Where is the master that could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every man is an unique.—Emerson.
When a great kingdom takes a lowly position, it becomes the place of concourse for the world; it is the wife of the world. The wife by quietness invariably conquers the man; and since quietness is also lowliness, therefore a great kingdom, by lowliness towards a small kingdom, may take that small kingdom; and a small kingdom, by lowliness towards a great kingdom, may take that great kingdom. So that either the one stoops to conquer, or the other is low and conquers. If the great kingdom only desires to attach to itself and nourish—that is, benefit others, then the small kingdom will only wish to enter its service. But in other that both may have their wish, the great one should be lowly.—Lortsa.