



THE HOME CIRCLE

THE THISTLE.

You naughty, naughty thistle,
I think it a disgrace
To use so many horrid pins
To keep your clothes in place.

You should not be so thoughtless,
But try to do what's right;
Just think of other people, dear,
And stick the points in tight.
—Mary Seymour Cowles Clark, in St. Nicholas.

THE BIBLE IN LITERATURE.

The literary influence of the Bible appears the more wonderful when we consider that it is the work of a race not otherwise famous or potent in literature. We do not know, of course, what other books may have come from the Jewish nation and vanished with whatever power or beauty they possessed; but in those that remain there is little of exceptional force or charm for readers outside of the Hebrew race.

They have no broad human appeal, no universal significance, not even any signal excellence of form and imagery. Josephus is a fairly good historian, sometimes entertaining, but not comparable to Herodotus or Thu-

cydides or Tacitus or Gibbon. The Talmuds are vast store-houses of things new and old, where a careful searcher may now and then find a legendary gem or a quaint fragment of moral tapestry. In histories of medieval literature, Ibn Ezra of Toledo and Rashi of Lunel are spoken of with respect. In modern letters, works as far apart as the philosophical treatises of Spinoza and the lyrics of Heinrich Heine have distinction in their kind. No one thinks that the Hebrews are lacking in great and varied talents; but how is it that in world literature their only contribution that counts is the Bible? And how is it that it counts so immensely?

The fountain head of the power of the Bible in literature lies in its nearness to the very springs and sources of human life—life taken seriously, earnestly, intensely; life in its broadest meaning, including the inward as well as the outward; life interpreted in its relation to universal laws and eternal values. It is this vital quality in the narratives, the poems, the allegories, the meditations, the discourses, the letters, gathered in this book, that give it

first place among the books of the world not only for currency, but also for greatness.—Henry Van Dyke, in The Century.

THE HABIT OF KINDNESS.

I know of a home in which the very atmosphere is so charged with human loving kindness—that it is a delight to be a guest therein. I have been a guest in that home for weeks at a time, and I never heard a single harsh, unkind word spoken to or about any one. One day I said to the sweet and gentle mistress of the home:

"Do tell me, if you can, the secret of the beautiful and unfailing kindness that forms a part of the very atmosphere of this home. What is the real secret of it?"

"Why, I do not know that there is any secret about it. It is a kind of habit with us. You know that some people fall into the habit of always complaining. Others form the habit of always speaking sharply, while still others are habitually morose and sulk continually. Now, it is just as easy to form the habit of unkindness as it is to form the habit of kindness. When I was a little girl at home, my father had his children sing nearly every day:

"Oh, say a kind word if you can,
And you can, and you can;
Oh, say a kind word if you can,
And you can, and you can."

"If any one spoke an unkind word in the house, some one would be sure to sing these lines, and so we came to speak kindly nearly all the time.

So much happiness came from it that I resolved, when I came in possession of a home of my own, that habitual kindness should be the rule there."
"It is a beautiful rule," I said.
"It is a rule that will bring peace and joy to a home, and, as I said before, any one can cultivate the habit of kindness."

I believe this to be true, and I am sure that Sir Humphrey Davy told the truth when he said: "Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things in which smiles and small obligations, given habitually, are what win and preserve the heart and secure comfort."
—Selected.

WHAT IS NOW ILL BRED.

It is no longer well bred to talk about ill health. It is true that we are still hindered with relics of the days when one's health and ill were the most interesting topic of conversation. We will perfunctorily ask: "How do you do?" But we have only pity or disgust for the person who really answers that question if she is not well. The woman who habitually pours out upon the unwilling ears of her friends the disagreeable tale of her headaches, her backaches, her worries or other ills; the woman whose greatest satisfaction seems to be to tell, in gruesome detail, every step of an operation either upon herself or some one else—these women are slowly but surely being isolated by the bar of social exclusion, and either ignored or avoided. We know for a certainty now that the psychic contagion which one person can

spread by suggestions with reference to disease is as real as the contagion from measles, or mumps, or scarlet fever. Modern society has recognized this psychic contagion, and is demanding that our conversation shall be clean and wholesome on subjects of health. To talk otherwise has become a sign of ill breeding. This is an epoch-making change in the character of human conversation, and it has occurred within the memory of many of us.—Ladies' Home Journal.

WHY WE SAY "YOURS SINCERELY."

Have you ever reflected, when you finish up your letter, "Yours sincerely, John Smith," why you do so. Well, if you subscribed yourself, "Yours without wax, John Smith," it would amount to the same thing. Here's how:

When the Roman jurymen returned their verdicts, they usually did so on a wax tablet. In cases, however, where the verdict was so overwhelmingly in favor of a person on trial for any offense they were allowed to give their verdict *Sine Cera*—that is to say, without wax, or without going to the formality of inscribing their verdict on the wax tablet (*cera*). So when you subscribe yourself, "Yours sincerely," to a person, you mean—when you are serious, of course—that your regard for him is above-board. "Yours faithfully" is the business style, "Yours truly" the indifferent and "Yours, etc.," the most unpardonable of epistolary atrocieties, according to the unwritten code. An English Cabinet Minister, when

writing to you in the official style, will subscribe himself, "Your obedient, humble servant." A Frenchman will tell you that he "Remains with especial sentiments of the highest consideration" your Jules is M. de M. A Chinaman will say, "Farewell, most favored to Heaven. May the gods preserve your honorable health!"
—Northwestern Christian Advocate.

WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH.

A little boy declared that he loved his mother "with all his strength." He was asked to explain what he meant by "with all his strength." He said: "Well, I'll tell you. You see, we live on the fourth floor of this tenement, and there's no elevator, and the coal is kept down in the basement. Mother is dreadfully tired all the time, and she isn't very strong, so I see to it that the coal has to never empty. I lug the coal up four flights of stairs all by myself, and it's a pretty big job. It takes all my strength to get it up there. Now isn't that loving my mother with all my strength?"—Selected.

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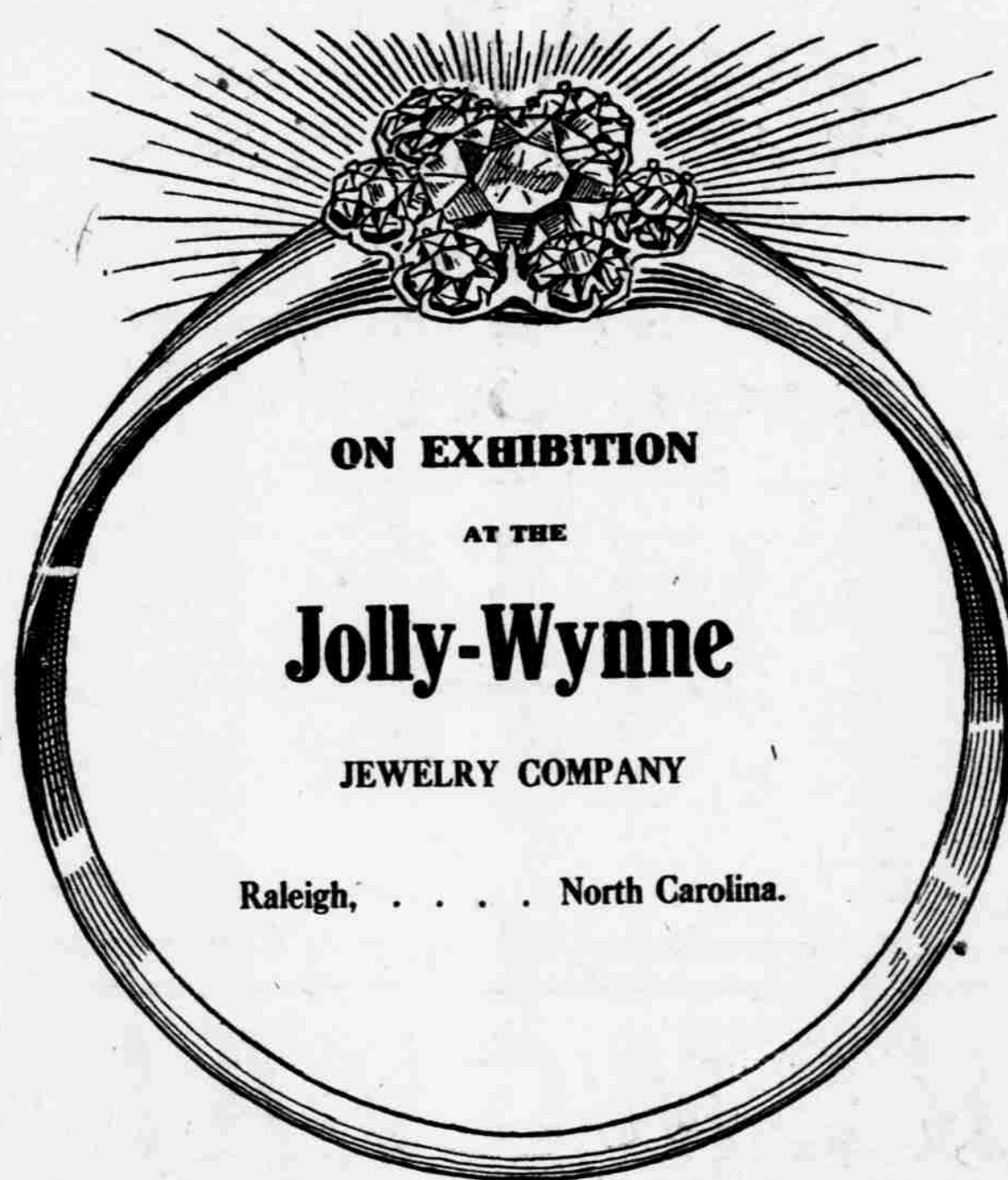
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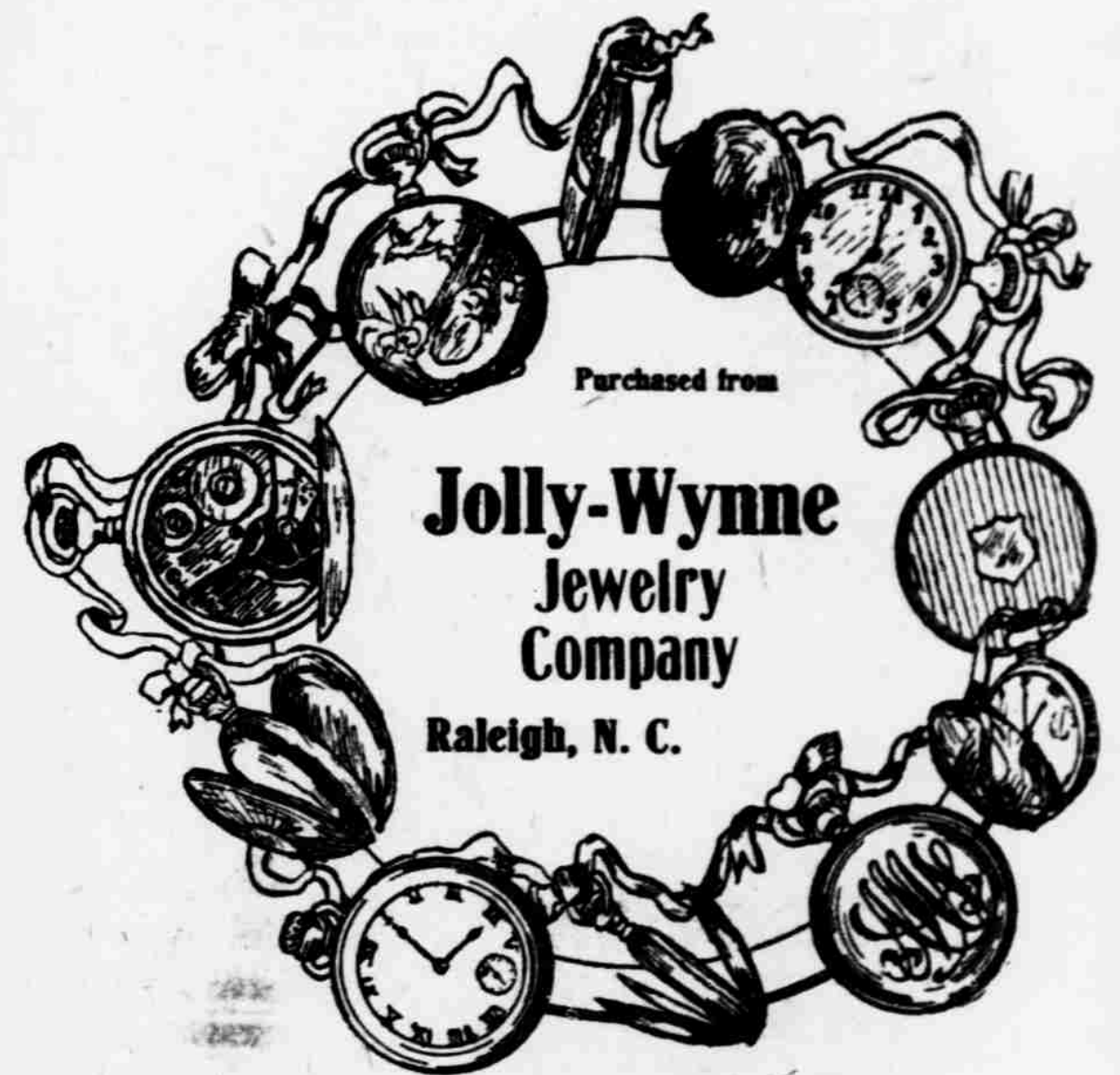


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