

OUR SOCIAL CHAT

All letters intended for this department should be addressed to "Aunt Jennie," care of The Progressive Farmer, Raleigh, N. C.

Aunt Jennie's Letter.

An old member has returned to gladden us with her presence. Plum is with us, and we hope that she will not again absent herself. Although our band is a large one, we miss the links which bind us if one is absent. Did you ever try to sew on a machine when the band or belt over the wheels had been fastened with a crooked piece of wire? Well, I have, and at each revolution there was a click that caused me to quake with fear lest some would break or go wrong. Now when one of you fail to write, I feel right much the same way. Not many of our Circle have died during the seven years since we organized, but some have emigrated to other States, and many have married. The latter classes we still hold, and they—most of them—have proved faithful friends of our department. This we appreciate and will strive with renewed energy to merit.

Mamie says that "anyone who is working away on a large life plan should take advantage of every day and every hour." How does that strike you, or have you a life plan? You can't work an example if you simply sit and hold your slate.

I must say that Jack's letter on literature was fine and I trust that you read it. Bad books are just like bad associates; one is as apt to contaminate as the other. I believe that bad books are worse, for they give our young people false ideas of life that are as unreal as unwholesome.

Christmas is coming when the parent is worried as to what to give the child. Toys are for amusement, and possibly for one day only, as they are soon broken and cast aside, but give the children good books—those that uplift, elevate and those that teach life in its reality and have noble, true characters, and ere long your child will take them as his own standard in life. Then he will learn nobleness and truth, and it will seem a necessity to do right, for is that not what their ideal character in the book would do?

But let me tell you don't forget your own example counts. You can't fool the children every time you think that you do. They have little eyes and ears, but they see and hear a lot. One poor woman wrote me not long since to please write an article on "The father's responsibility to his children," and tell our readers that I believed that the father was the sole cause of his children's worthless living. Now I can't agree with that sister, for I hold that both parents are responsible. Neither of them as parents can evade a God-given duty without His penalty. A mother came to me once with tears in her eyes and explained how her husband had come home drunk and had insisted on drawing water from the well until every vessel in the house was full to overflowing, then he deliberately brought the bucket in from the well and sat it on her newly-made bread which sat on the stove. It was ludicrous and pathetic, as that cake combined all the meal they had. I gave her more and she waited until he fell asleep and then cooked it; however she remarked that "if their children ever amounted to anything in the world, it must be solely through her efforts." Now, she felt all the responsibility on her weak shoulders when in her girlhood she had trusted this man and believed in him. Who was to blame for her loss of confidence, him or his dram? Remember, he could not swallow it with his lips closed and no one compelled him to open his mouth.

By the way, I cannot close without

telling you that there are some letters in the Ladies' Home Journal for October, November and December that I wish every mother and daughter of this Circle to read. They are simply fine and the lessons are wholesome.

Now don't let yourself be too busy to write to me right away. Don't disappoint me.

AUNT JENNIE.

When Reading is Not to be Commended.

Dear Aunt Jennie: I appreciate what you say this week about people letting opportunity pass for making others happy, especially when you refer to the man who never tells his wife that she has been a good wife to him until he is saying good-bye for the last time.

This, I think, should not only apply to married people but to friends, sisters, and brothers. A little visit to my home, and I can tell sister how much I love her, and tell my brothers how much help they are to me, and my dear father what love I have for him—but I did not learn to tell mother that I loved her until it was too late. It not only helps them to tell them these things, but it makes me feel that I have had a good time, and surely I have. The sweetest part of our lives should be without people and should come from the known love that exists between us. It certainly cannot hurt us to say, "Sister, you grow sweeter every day. I so proud of you." "Father, it makes me feel good every time I think of what a good father you have been to me." Little things like these go further than any one thinks.

I also notice in this week's Chat that our friend Jack has something to say on reading, which is very good. I agree that it is a good thing when it is properly done, but it is also a bad thing when it is not done rightly. It is so very unpleasant to see the head of the family buried in his newspaper from supper to bedtime, while the oldest daughter is equally as much absorbed in a book, and mother and the smaller ones entertaining one another as best they may. When the readers are asked to lay a stick of wood on the fire, the harsh reply is, "Do it yourself; I am reading." And so they read until bedtime and know very little of what has been going on in their own homes from night to night.

But do not misunderstand me. Look at the other side. Let father take his paper and ask the rest of the family to permit him to read the news to them. They all consent. They all hear it and then they all discuss it together, and so passes the evening off very pleasantly and beneficial. The next night sister wishes to read a good book aloud. All the family catch on to the story and every one grows interested, so much so that she has to stop for some one to put the wood on the fire, so that none of the story may be lost by any one.

These little things where all the family take a part in and all are interested, go to make homes happy and create little incidents that will always be remembered by the members of the family. I speak from experience.

SEARCH WARD.

Harnett Co., N. C.

Ruby's Views

Dear Aunt Jennie: I have been thinking of writing to the Chat for some time, but as Jack Klinnard's letter caused such a lively commotion, I thought I would wait till the war was over and peace declared before venturing on the battlefield. To Jack I say, Hold fast to your principle and ideal, but sir, please accord the poor, overworked, tired-out (men-

tally and physically) mother, laundress, seamstress—and oh! so many more vocations—the privilege of dressing as she pleases, be it wrapper or tight-fitting dress, for to me comfort comes before looks in dress, especially when standing over the hot stove putting up fruit on a hot August day or over a steaming tub of hot clothes. It is utterly impossible for any manual laborer, be it man or woman, to look as neat and "dressy" at dirty work as if they were sitting in the parlor; though of course I admire and love to see every one dressed in pretty clothes, but suit the dress to the occasion.

RUBY.

Mecklenburg Co., N. C.

An Old Member Returns.

Dear Aunt Jennie: Do you remember me? I trust that I still hold a membership in your Circle, but have taken such a long vacation that I suppose I am forgotten by most of the Chatterers. I have spent most of my time during the last four years over in Virginia, and since my return to my country home in the Old North State I have found much pleasure in reading the Chat.

Poor Jack Klinnard! I feel that I must give him a word of sympathy. I don't think I read his first letter. But I must think that he gave us some good advice. And although the men need it as well (for I think it applies to farmers' daughters as well as wives), we should appreciate it and take courage and say something about the men's dress. Jack, it is not always convenient for us to go as tidy around the home as we would like, but I must say that I detest dressing sacks on the street. It is unnecessary and very unbecoming to young ladies.

How many of the chatterers have studied stenography? Or held a position? Let us hear your views on this subject. It may be instructive as well as interesting.

Yours cordially,

PLUM.

Gates County, N. C.

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