Secrets of Happy ~ ~ Home Life ~ ~

~~~ by J. R. Miller ~~~

~~~

Secrets of Happy Home Life

by J. R. Miller

edited by Christian Horstmann

~~~~~~~~~~~~

"Each man's chimney is his golden milestone,
Is the central point, from which he measures
Every distance
Through the gateways of the world around him."
~ Longfellow
~~~~~~~~~~~~

Secrets of Happy Home Life
Copyright © 2021 by Christian Horstmann
All rights reserved.

Carmel Cove Publications
an imprint of ChristianFamilyReformation.com

Originally published by J. R. Miller as
Secrets of Happy Home Life: What Have You to Do With It?

This reprint is based upon the 1894 edition, and it has been modified and re-typeset at the sole discretion of the Editor.

Cover photo by John-Mark Smith on Unsplash.

Internal photo credits:
page 2: © Dimaberkut, Megapixl.com; page 5: © Lja, Megapixl.com; page 8: © Beznika, Megapixl.com; page 10: © Serezniy, Megapixl.com; page 13: © Maszas, Megapixl.com; page 18: © Monkeybusinessimages | Megapixl.com.

~~~ *Author's Preface* ~~~

One summer afternoon during our great War, some Southern generals were sitting under a tree, when suddenly a shell from a Northern battery crashed over their heads. The officers hastened to seek a safer place. But one of the party lingered; and the others, glancing around, saw him stooping to the ground, as if he had found something of great value. The crashing of the shell through the branches had torn a bird's nest from its place, and hurled it to the ground. And the general of armies was gathering up this nest, with its sacred burden of young bird-life, to replace it among the branches.

This book may come into the hands of some whose home happiness has been shattered, with its torn fragments lying now upon the ground. It would be a comfort to the author if these simple words would put fresh hope into a discouraged heart, and thus be the hand to help restore the home to its true place – amidst the branches of the tree of love.

~ J. R. M.
Philadelphia

"Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say,
Peace be to this house."

~ Jesus Christ

~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"A truce to the jarring notes of life,
The cries of pain and passion.
Over this lull in the eager strife,
Love hovers, Eden-fashion.
In the wee brown house were lessons taught
Of strong and sturdy living,
And ever where honest hands have wrought,
God hears the true Thanksgiving."

~ Margaret E. Sangster (1838 – 1912)
~~~~~~~~~~~~~

~~~ *Secrets of Happy Home Life* ~~~

HOME IS AMONG THE HOLIEST OF WORDS. A true home is one of the most sacred of places. It is a sanctuary into which men flee from the world's perils and alarms. It is a resting-place where, at close of day, the weary retire to gather new strength for the battle and toils of tomorrow. It is the place where love learns its lessons, where life is schooled into discipline and strength, and where character is shaped. Out of the homes of a community comes the life of the community, as a river from the thousand springs that gush out on the hillsides.

We are all concerned in the making of one home – our own home. One instrument out of tune in an orchestra mars the music which breaks upon the ears of the listeners. One discordant life in a household mars the perfectness of the music of love in the family. We should make sure that our life is not the one that is out of tune. We do not need to worry about the other lives; if each looks to his own, that will do.

When our Lord sent His disciples out to preach, one of His instructions was, "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house." *Peace* is a good word. It is more than a salutation; when it falls from the Master's lips, it is a Divine benediction as well. Peace, too, is a fruit of grace which includes all that is sweetest and most Divine in Christian culture. It is especially suggestive of the harmony of love, which is the perfection of beautiful living. Christ's peace is a blessing which comes out of struggle and discipline. Well, therefore, does the salutation "Peace!" befit a Christian home – which ought to be the abode of peace.

What are some of the secrets of happy homemaking? The answer might be given in one word: *Christ.* Christ at the marriage-altar; Christ on the bridal journey; Christ when the new home is set up; Christ when the baby is born; Christ when the child dies; Christ in the pinching times; Christ in the days of plenty; Christ in the nursery, in the kitchen, and in the parlor; Christ in the toil and

in the rest; Christ along all the years; Christ when the wedded pair walk towards the sunset gates; Christ in the sad hour when farewells are spoken, and when one goes on before and the other stays to bear the unshared grief. Christ is the secret of happy home life.

~~~~~~~~~~~~

The happy marriage

But the lesson may be broken up. The making of a home begins before there is a home; it begins in the days when the life-choices are made. There are many unhappy marriages. There are families sheltered in houses which are not homes. A happy home does not come as a matter-of-course simply because there has been a marriage ceremony, pledged vows, a ring, the minister's "Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," and a benediction. Happiness does not come through any mere forms or ceremonies; it has to be planned for, lived for, sacrificed for, prayed for, and oftentimes suffered for.

There must be a wise choosing before marriage, or it may be impossible to make a happy home. At few points in life is Divine guidance more sorely needed than when the question of
~~~~~~~~~~~~

marriage is decided. A mistake at this point will cast its shadows down all the years, to the close of life. Many a life is blighted by a foolish marriage. Wedded happiness depends greatly on reverent, prayerful, deliberate, wise choosing before marriage.

But now the choices have been made – carefully made, we will assume. The happy day has come! The engaged lovers stand at the marriage-altar. Taking the woman's hand, the man says to her, "I take thee to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge thee my love." Taking the hand of the man, the woman says to him – with slight verbal variations – the same words. The two are pronounced husband and wife, and go forth to begin their wedded life together – no longer two, but now one.

The happy pair are in their own home. It may be a fine, great house with rich furniture, costly pictures, and all the elegances of wealth; or it may be a little house with four rooms, cheap furniture, homemade carpets, and few adornments. It makes very little difference about the size of the house, or what its furniture may be. The happiness of the home does not depend upon the house or what it contains; the people who live in the house make the happiness, or mar it.

~~~~~~~~~~~~

The husband's role in a happy home

The husband has his part. He must be a good man. Not every man who marries thinks of the responsibility he assumes when he takes a young girl away from the shelter of father-love and mother-love – the softest, warmest nest in the world – and leads her into a new home, where henceforth his love is to be her only shelter. Well may the woman say as she goes to the marriage-altar,

"Before I trust my fate to thee,
Or place my hand in thine;
Before I let thy future give
Color and form to mine;
~~~~~~~~~~~~

Before I peril all to thee,
Question thy soul tonight for me.

Does there within thy dimmest dreams
A possible future shine
Wherein thy life could henceforth breathe
Untouched, unshared by mine?
If so, at any pain or cost –
Oh, tell me before all is lost!"

No man is fit to be a husband who is not a good man. He need not be great, nor rich, nor brilliant, nor clever; but he must be good, or he is not worthy to take a gentle, trusting woman's tender life into his keeping. Of course, he must love his wife; for without love there is no real marriage, and ceremony and rings and vows and prayers are only empty formalities. He must love his wife –and always be her lover. The world has read and heard quite enough moralizing about a wife's duty to be always winning and attractive – retaining the charm of girlhood amidst all cares, toils, and sorrows. Of course; but is a husband under less obligation to love his wife, and to always be lover-like? This is a good rule, which should work both ways.

But affection, however desirable, is not all that is needed in a husband who wishes to do his full share in happy homemaking. Life is not all sentiment. We cannot live on nectar. Happiness must have a very practical basis. A good husband must be a man. He must be a good man – manly, true, worthy, brave, and generous. He must be a man whom a noble woman can respect and honor, all the days of her life. He must be a sober man; no man who comes home under the influence of intoxicating drink, even if it is only occasional, is going to do quite his share in making happiness for the woman who has trusted her all to him. He must be a man of pure and unblemished life, whose character is above suspicion, and whose name will always be an honor and a pride in his own home. The husband has a great deal to do with the question of home happiness.

~~~~~~~~~~~~
~~~~~~~~~~~~

The wife's role in a happy home

The wife, too, has a responsibility. The prosaic arts of housekeeping are far more important factors of home happiness than many people without experience imagine. Mr. Ruskin talks to young women of the etymology of the name wife. "What do you think the beautiful word *wife* comes from?" he asks. "It means 'weaver.' You must either be *housewives* or *house-moths* – remember that. In the deep sense, you must weave men's fortunes, and embroider them; or feed upon them, and bring them to decay. Wherever a true wife comes, home is always around her. The stars may be the canopy over her head; the glowworm in the night's cold grass [may] be the fire at her feet; but home is where she is. And for a noble woman, it stretches far around her – better than houses ceiled with cedar, or painted with vermilion – shedding its quiet light for those who else were homeless."

Home is the true wife's kingdom. There, before all other places, she must be strong and beautiful. She may touch life outside in many ways, if she can do it without slighting the duties that are hers within her own doors. But if any calls for her service must be declined, they should not be the duties of her home. These are hers, and no other woman's. Very largely does the wife hold in her hands, as a sacred trust, the happiness and the highest good of the hearts that nestle there. The best husband – the truest, the noblest, the gentlest, and the richest-hearted – cannot make his home happy, if his wife is not a helpmeet to him in every reasonable sense. In the last analysis, home happiness does depend upon the wife. Her spirit gives the home its atmosphere. Her hands fashion its beauty. Her heart makes its love. And the goal is so worthy, so noble, and so Divine, that no woman who has been called to be a wife – and who has listened to the call – should consider any price too great to pay in order to be the light, the joy,

the blessing, and the inspiration of a home. Men with fine gifts think it is worthwhile to live just to paint a few great pictures which shall be looked at and admired for generations, or to write a few songs which shall sing themselves into the ears and hearts of men. But the woman who makes a sweet, beautiful home – filling it with love and prayer and purity – is doing something better than anything else her hands could find to do beneath the skies.

~~~~~~~~~~~~

The role of both husband and wife in a happy home

Some marriages are unhappy. How can husband and wife live happily in their wedded life? Wedded happiness is a lesson that must be learned. No two lives brought into this close relationship can blend into one without self-discipline. "Marriage is the beautiful unfolding of many years. We are not married on any day, but all along; for love…

…Yet always opes
Fuller and fuller with each day and hour,
Heartening the soul with odor of fresh hopes
And longings high, and gushings of wide power;
Yet never is, nor shall be, fully blown,
Save in the forethought of the Eternal One."

Often, it takes a long while for a wedded pair to learn the lesson of living happily together. They are discouraged because such love as theirs does not yield perfect happiness from the very first day. It always costs to learn the lesson. The marble must waste as the image grows. There must be the cutting away of much in both lives; there must be restraint, self-denial, and self-effacement while they are being trained to live one life rather than two. Love is always discipline.

"For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear – believe the aged friend –
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is."
~~~~~~~~~~~~

St. Paul lays down the basis for happy wedded life in these words: "Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Perhaps these instructions are not always well-understood. Sometimes one of the counsels, and sometimes the other, is unduly emphasized. Some men insist upon the first: "Wives, be in subjection to your husbands." They interpret the words somewhat harshly, as if a wife were to be only like a child to her husband – or even like a servant, whose duty is to serve his wants, to please him, and to run at his every call and command. This is in accordance with heathen notions of the marriage relationship, but it is not in harmony with Christian teaching. It is to be particularly noted that St. Paul nowhere says: "Wives, obey your husbands." … However, the spirit of love is always that of subjection, of yielding, and of serving in all life's relationships.

In another place, where St. Paul gives similar instruction, his words are, "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church." No doubt, the husband is the head of the household; but what a responsibility this teaching puts upon him! His wife is to be in subjection to him, "as unto the Lord." He is to be to her what Christ is to the Church.

If a man will insist upon his wife's fulfilling her part, he must also insist on honestly fulfilling his own part – all the sacred duties which are his, as a husband. What, then, is the husband's share in this happy home making? "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it." A husband is to love his wife. Is love despotic? Does love put its recipient in a servant's place? No! Love serves. It seeks not its own. It desires "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." It does not demand attention, deference, service, or subjection. It seeks rather to serve, to give, and to honor.

The measure of the love required by the husband is to be well-noted: "Even as Christ also loved the church." This is a lofty standard. How did Christ show His love for His Church? Think of His gentleness to His friends, His patience with them in all their faultiness, His thoughtfulness, and His unwearying kindness.

Never did a harsh word fall from His lips upon their ears. Never did He do anything to give them pain. It was not easy for Him to maintain, at all times, such constancy and composure and quietness of love towards them; for they were very faulty, and they tested Him in a thousand ways. But His affection never wearied nor failed, not even for a moment! Husbands are to love their wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself up for it. He loved even to the cost of utmost self-sacrifice!

However, there are men who would do this, whose love would sacrifice even life itself for a wife; but they fail in daily and hourly tenderness, when there is no demand for great self-denial. Hence the other counsel must also be remembered: "Love your wives, and be not bitter against them." More wives might complain of the lack of love in the little tendernesses, rather than in great acts and manifestations. A true woman's heart craves gentleness. It is hurt by bitter words, by coldness, by impatience, by harsh criticisms, by neglect, and by the withholding of the expressions of affection. Love craves its daily bread of tenderness. No husband should deny his wife the little things of affection – the amenities of love – during the busy and trying days, and then think he can make amends by putting a flower in her cold hand when she lies in the coffin. Will not conscience then whisper love's reproach?

"You placed this flower in her hand, you say;
This pure, pale rose in her hand of clay?
Methinks, could she lift her sealed eyes,
They would meet your own with a grieved surprise.

When did you give her a flower before?
Ah, well, what matter, when all is o'er?

~~~ J. R. Miller

But I pray you think…
That love will starve, if it is not fed –
That true hearts pray for their daily bread."

No true wife will ever quarrel with the Divine law that makes the husband the head of the household, if she has a husband who loves her up to the measure of the Divine requirement for husbands: "Even as Christ also loved the church." Such love never demands obedience, and never demands anything; it seeks not to be served, but to serve. On the other hand, true love in a wife also lives to serve. Love always serves, or it is not love at all. The greatest in Christ's Kingdom are those who serve the most unselfishly. Husband and wife vie with each other in loving and serving. They mutually bear each other's burdens. The husband is the head, but he never says so; he never reminds his wife of it; he never claims authority; he defers to her in everything. And the wife recognizes her husband as head; she honors him, and looks up to him with pride and confidence – all the more so because he never demands subjection. Thus true love in husband and wife never has any trouble about rights or place. Side by side they stand – these two wedded lovers – each a part of the other, each incomplete, and each a mere fragment without the other; but strong in their happy union in love!

~~~~~~~~~~~~

The children's role in a happy home

But there are other elements in the composition of the home. Among the blessings which make happiness are the children, who come with their sweet life and their holy gladness. Children bring care; and they demand toil and sacrifice, and often cost pain and grief. Yet the blessing which they bring to a true home repays the care and the cost a thousand times over! It is a sacred hour in a home when a baby is born and laid in the arms of a young father and mother. It is the final seal upon their wedded love. It is the closing benediction of the marriage ceremony. It draws fragments of heaven trailing after it, down to the home on earth. Few deeper or purer joys are ever experienced in this
~~~~~~~~~~~~

world, than the joy of true parents on the birth of their first child. Much of home's happiness along the years is made by the children. They are also great blessings to their parents. Often, they teach more lessons than they are taught. We say we train our children; but they train us, too, if we think of them as we should – that is, as immortal beings who have come from God, to be prepared by us for their mission. Sings a reverent mother over her child's cradle:

"My child, I fear thee; thou'rt a spirit, soul!
How shall I walk before thee? keep my garments whole?
O Lord, give strength, give wisdom for the task,
To train this child for thee."

Jesus said of little children, that those who receive them in His name receive Him. Therefore, may we not surely say that children bring great possibilities of blessing and happiness to a home? If we receive them as Christ's messengers, who are sent to us in His name; and if we entertain them as we would entertain Him, if He had come to us in their place – we shall obtain deep, rich blessedness and joy from them.

~~~~~~~~~~~~

The mother and father's role in a happy home

A true mother is one of the holiest secrets of home happiness. God sends many beautiful things to this world, and many noble gifts; but no blessing is richer than that which He bestows in a mother who has learned love's lessons well, and who has realized something of the meaning of her sacred calling. One writes,
~~~~~~~~~~~~

~~~ J. R. Miller

"God thought to give the sweetest thing
In His almighty power
To earth; and deeply pondering
What it should be, one hour
In fondest joy and love of heart
Outweighing every other,
He moved the gates of heaven apart
And gave to earth a mother."

A father also should be a blessing to a home. The modern tendency to put upon the wife and mother all the responsibility for the making of the home and its happiness is not sanctioned by Christian teachings. The Divine commands for the building of the home and the training of the children are given primarily to the man, although they are meant for both husband and wife. He cannot evade the responsibility; his position as the head of the family puts upon him the obligation. Besides, it is not manly that a man should want to put the whole burden on her whom he calls "the weaker vessel." If his wife is weak, and he is so strong; then let him remember that it is the privilege and the duty of strength to bear the heavy part of life's burdens.

There are parts of the home-duty which a woman can do infinitely better than a man. Men's hands are clumsy, and often hurt gentle hearts, when it was meant that they should give healing and help. The man has the heavy care of providing for the household. There are tasks, too, for which woman's gentler hands are better fitted. But let no husband entertain the notion that he has no responsibility for the happiness of his home, beyond the providing of food and clothing and other comforts. His strong life should be the secure shelter beneath which his wife and children may safely abide. His character should be a continual revealing of the love and truth and holiness of God. He should live in such a manner that – by seeing him day after day – his family shall learn to know the beauty of Christ. He is the priest of his house; and as such, he should speak to God for his family, and also speak to

them for God. Through him, blessings should come to his home every day.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~

The brothers and sisters' role in a happy home

Brothers and sisters have their part in making the home happy. Yet they do not always live together in such a way as to make the music of the home a unified, glad, sweet song. Sometimes there is a lack of geniality in their dispositions. Then there often seems to be the feeling that home-affections do not need the care and effort that other friendships require. We cannot be brusque, curt, or rude with other people, and still expect them to bear patiently with us in spite of our unmannerly behavior. But we are sure of our home-friends (at least we let ourselves feel that way), and so we think that we do not need to be gentle and thoughtful towards them. Hence it comes to pass that in too many homes, brothers and sisters live together year after year under the same roof – mingling in the household affairs; and yet never forming close friendships, never knitting soul to soul, and living as total strangers to each other's inner life. Thus many rich possibilities of close and holiest friendships are missed.

Another thing that too often mars the home-life of brothers and sisters is a spirit of dictation and criticism. Faults are seen, pointed out, and reproved – openly, and not in a gentle manner. What one does, the others are inclined to follow; and thus the habit grows, until little else but sharp speech and rude wrangling is heard in the home where the conversation might have so much of sweetness and profit in it!

These are suggestions of ways in which – in too many homes – one of the secrets of happiness is lost. It is possible for brothers and sisters to live together in a home in such a way that they add greatly to the happiness and the richness of the household life, and become comforts and helps to each other. It is said that the poet-sisters, Alice and Phoebe Cary, had a secret of happy living together, which it would be good for all brothers and sisters to learn. "Whatever one felt or endured – because of it, she would not inflict any suffering upon her sister; no, not even if that
~~~~~~~~~~~~~

sister had inadvertently been the cause of it. If one sister was out of sorts, she went into her own room, shut her door, and had it out by herself." These are good rules to be adopted in other homes. If we are feeling uncomfortable from any cause, we have no right – according to the law of love – to diffuse our uncomfortableness through the household. If we are in any unhappy mood, in which we cannot suppress the bad humor; we have no right to vent it in the circle of our loved ones. We would do far better to go to our own room, or out alone into the fresh air, and stay there until we have gotten back our sweet spirit again; so that we may scatter roses among our loved ones, and not thorns.

The possibilities of happiness and blessing among brothers and sisters only can be experienced by cultivating the love which seeks not its own, which is not provoked, which bears and endures all things, and which never fails. Love's first lesson is that of giving up one's own way, denying one's self, and suffering in silence. Where this lesson has been learned, or is being learned, in a household of young people; each thinks of giving to the others, and not of taking from them. Each one cultivates gentleness and kindness. The speech of the home grows quiet and tender, and is never loud nor angry. The Golden Rule is the law of each life. There is love, and that love reveals itself in a thousand little ways of courtesy and thoughtfulness – nameless things, but things that make up a home happiness upon which heaven's angels look down with delight.

Not very long can any family life go on unbroken. While we can, we should live together sweetly and patiently – loving and serving each other in all beautiful and Christ-like ways.

~~~~~~~~~~~~

Some suggestions for building a happy home

The daily home-life of the household carries in it many possibilities of happiness, which are not always experienced by every family. Some suggestions may be made. One is that love must prevail in all the family life. Let parents keep the confidence and affection of their children, as long as they live. One of the ways to make sure of this is to never tire of the little marks and tokens of love which children naturally give. The time never comes when it is unmanly for a man to kiss his mother. In the ideal home, every child has a good-night kiss for the parents before parting. Let the children do their part, too, in showing affection. There are homes that are chill and cold, which could be warmed into love's richest glow in a little time – if all the household hearts were to grow affectionate.

Another suggestion is that all family strife and contention should cease. Why should parents discourage their children by continually scolding and finding fault with them? Why should children dishonor their parents by disobedience, by rude and unloving treatment, by lack of respect, and by refusing to yield to the order of the home? Why should brothers fail in the duties of civility and courtesy to their sisters? Why should sisters show no loving interest in their brothers, and fail to overshadow them as if with angel-wings? Why should brothers wrangle and quarrel, separate their interests, and not stand together? Why should sisters have their miserable little disputes – their envies, jealousies, and piques? Let there be peace in all the home-life!

Another suggestion is that we should not grow discouraged, even if our homes are not yet what we crave them to be. There are some who feel that the battle is hopeless, and that they can never grow into beautiful life and character in their present circumstances. That is a mistake. It is possible to grow into all the beauty of peace, wherever we may be placed. A lily finds its home
~~~~~~~~~~~~

in a black bog, but it blooms into perfect loveliness. Suppose that your home-life is discouraging, even to the last degree; yet you may live sweetly in the midst of it, through the grace and help of God. And who knows? It is possible that your sweet life may become the power of God to change the home-life into heavenliness! Perhaps God has put you as leaven there, to leaven the whole lump.

I have known a girl go out of a Godless and worldly home to college, only to find Christ and return home as a beautiful and earnest Christian. Then I have seen that home transformed – in a few years, by that daughter's quiet influence – into an ideal Christian home.

Even though our home may not be what we would like it to be, and even though it may lack warmth and tenderness and congeniality; still, while it is our home, it is our duty to stay in it contentedly, and to grow in it into beauty. We know that Jesus lived until thirty years of age in a humble peasant home, with very little culture and education, and amidst the deprivations of poverty and hard toil. Yet He was not discontented there. He did not complain of the narrowness and the littleness. He did not chafe under the limitations and the burdens. There His life grew into that marvelous sweetness, that wondrous beauty, and that richness and greatness which we see in Him when – at thirty years of age – He went out to begin His ministry. Wherever we are planted, we can also grow into strength, nobleness, and loveliness.

Patience is another lesson in learning to live happily together at home. The children of a family do not all have the same tastes. It is very easy to fall into the habit of criticizing each other. We know how nearly Martha spoiled her home happiness, and her sister's as well, by criticism. Criticism never fosters affection; you never loved any one better for criticizing you. Usually, the best service that we can do to a brother or sister is to live a sweet, patient, beautiful, Christ-like life ourselves – leaving to God the fashioning of our siblings' lives. If they are true Christians, He is teaching them and putting His own image upon their souls. We might mar this Divine work by our criticism. Suppose you went into an artist's studio, and saw a picture at which he had been

working for months, which was yet unfinished. Would you, who are not an artist, take up his brush and begin to put touches here and there on the canvas? Each life of husband, wife, child, brother, or sister in your home is a picture which God is painting, and which is yet unfinished. Beware that you do not mar His work! Therefore, let us be patient with one another at home. We all have our faults, and we all make mistakes; but we can help each other more by loving patience than by caustic criticism.

Religion is the great master-secret of all happy home-life. The Spirit of Christ alone will enable us to live together in perfect peace and love. The presence of Christ in a home is a perpetual benediction. We cannot be selfish, we cannot wrangle and strive, we cannot be bitter and unkind, and we cannot be irritable and unreasonable when we are conscious of the presence of Christ. If only we can make Christ an abiding Guest in our home, and if we can keep ourselves aware of His being with us; our household life cannot do anything other than grow wondrously sweet!

~~~~~~~~~~~~

When sorrow enters a happy home

Into every home, at some time, sorrow comes. It is then that the blessing of religion is especially revealed. We do not see the stars until the sun goes down. The comforts of Christian faith do not reveal themselves to us in their richest light and peace, until the darkness of sorrow rests upon our home. But there is light in the darkness when Christ is the Guest. Here, for example, is what one Christian mother of a dead child could say to a mother of living children:

"Mother, I see you with your nursery light,
Leading your babies all in white
To their sweet rest;
Christ, the Good Shepherd, carries mine tonight;
And that is best.

I cannot help tears when I see them twine
Their fingers in yours, and their bright curls shine
On your warm breast;
~~~~~~~~~~~~

But the Savior's is purer than yours or mine;
He can love best.

You tremble each hour because your arms
Are weak; your heart is wrung with alarms,
And sore oppressed;
My darlings are safe, out of reach of harms;
And that is best."

Indeed, it is true that when Christ is in a home, even sorrow itself becomes one of the secrets of happiness. Our Lord's Beatitude says, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Homes that have never known grief may be very happy in love, and very bright with sweet gladness; but after sorrow has been a guest within their doors, and has left its messages and blessings, there is a depth of quiet joy which was never experienced before. The family fellowship is sweeter after there has been a break in the circle. The love is tenderer when tears have come into its gladness. A vacant chair is a new and sacred bond in the household life.

"The heart that suffers, most may sing;
All beauty seems of sorrow born;
This truth, half seen In life's young morn,
Stands full and clear at evening.
The gems of thought most highly prized
Are tears of sorrow crystallized.

All beauty has in sorrow birth;
Heartaches inspire the poet's themes,
And shape the painter's, sculptor's dreams;
Such is the destiny of earth.
His beams the heaven-taught genius throws
O'er all, and all with radiance glows!"

But it is only when Christ is in the home that sorrow sweetens the life. There can be no rainbow without cloud and rain; but neither can there be a rainbow, even with cloud and rain, unless the sun is shining through the falling drops. The rarest splendors

of happiness can only be known when sorrow's clouds have overshadowed the home, and the rain of tears is falling; but unless the light of Divine love is pouring through the tears, there can be no splendor of peace and comfort – nothing but darkness and clouds.

~~~~~~~~~~~~

A beautiful and happy home

Few things that we can do in this world are so well worth doing as the making of a beautiful and happy home. He who does this builds a sanctuary for God, and opens a fountain of blessing for mankind. Far more than we know, the strength and beauty of our lives depend upon the home in which we dwell. He who goes forth in the morning from a happy, loving, prayerful home, into the world's strife and temptations and struggles and duties – that person is strong, and they are inspired for noble and victorious living. The children who are brought up in a true home go out trained and equipped for life's battles and tasks – carrying in their hearts a secret of strength, which will make them brave and loyal

~~~~~~~~~~~~

to God, and which will keep them pure in the world's sorest temptations.

We may all do loving service, therefore, by helping to make one of the world's homes – the one in which we dwell – brighter and happier! No matter how plain it may be, nor how old-fashioned; yet if love is in it, if prayer connects it with heaven, and if Christ's benediction is upon it – it will be a transfigured spot. Poverty is no cross, if the home is full of bright cheer. The hardest toil is light, if love sings its songs amidst the clatter.

"Dear Moss," said the thatch on an old ruin, "I am so worn, so patched, and so ragged; really, I am quite unsightly. I wish you would come and cheer me up a little. You will hide all my infirmities and defects; and through your loving sympathy, no finger of contempt or dislike will be pointed at me."

"I come," said the moss. And it crept up and around, and in and out; until every flaw was hidden, and all was smooth and fair. Presently, the sun shone out; and the old thatch looked bright and fair – a picture of rare beauty – in the golden rays.

"How beautiful the thatch looks!" cried someone who saw it. "How beautiful the thatch looks!" said another. "Ah!" said the old thatch; "rather, let them say, 'How beautiful is the loving moss!' For it spends itself in covering up all my faults, keeping the knowledge of them all to herself; and by her own grace, she makes my age and poverty wear the garb of youth and luxuriance."

Thus it is that love covers the plainness and the ruggedness of the lowliest home. It hides its dreariness and its faults. It softens its roughness. It changes its pain into profit, and its loss into gain.

Let us live more for our homes! Let us love one another more. Let us cease to complain, criticize, and contradict each other. Let us be more patient with each other's faults. Let us not keep back the warm, loving words that lie in our hearts, until it is too late for them to give comfort. Soon, separations will come. One of every wedded pair will stand by the other's coffin and grave. Then every bitter word spoken, and every neglect of love's duty, will be like a thorn in the heart.

~~~ J. R. Miller

Carlyle, when he passed the spot where he had last seen his wife alive, would bare his old head in wind or rain – his features wrung with bitter, unavailing sorrow. "Oh," he would say; "if I could see her but for five minutes, to assure her that I really cared for her throughout all that! But she never knew it – she never knew it!"

We must give account for our idle silences, as well as for our idle words.

"Comfort one another,
With the hand-clasp close and tender,
With the sweetness love can render,
And looks of friendly eyes.
Do not wait with grace unspoken,
While life's dally bread is broken;
Gentle speech is oft like manna from the skies."

~~~~~~~~~~~~
~~~~~~~~~~~~