

HAPPINESS IN THE HOME

By The Very Rev. David Barry P.P. , S.T.L.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS DOMESTIC HAPPINESS?

THE CATECHISM tells us that many a marriage proves unhappy because the husband and wife enter into it from unworthy motives and with guilty consciences. I have always thought that it would be well to add to this answer another reason that is often at the root of domestic discord or unhappiness, namely, that the husband and wife do not make sufficient allowance for the faults and imperfections of each other.

Furthermore, family happiness, as well as the happiness of the individual, is sometimes sacrificed or not appreciated, for the reason that people do not realise what are the elements or what is the source of true happiness. Happiness, here or hereafter is what everyone is looking for and many fail to attain it; because they mistake the goal they are aiming at or miss the way to it.

Thus, the head of the family, even when active and anxious to secure the well-being, in essential matters, of those dependent on him, occasionally neglects the things that, though little in themselves, are vital to happiness as distinct from a kind of passive content, the outcome of a desire to make the best of things. A bread-winner will toil all day to secure good support and education for his children; still, when he comes home at night the stiffness or severity of his attitude may freeze the affection of his children or, at any rate, suppress such evidence of it as would help to promote cheerfulness and diffuse happiness all round.

Happiness, like perfection, may be said largely to consist in trifles, and yet happiness, any more than perfection, is no trifle. It is a pity that those who are irreproachable, as far as the main virtues of domestic life are concerned, so often, through thoughtlessness, fail in the petty ones. In other words, those who supply the power to work the household machinery sometimes by an unfortunate attitude in small things throw grit into it, when they might just as easily smooth and ease its motion with the oil of affability and a sweet or accommodating temper.

Well, the first false notion that it is necessary to remove is that there is no possibility of having true happiness in a household unless it is plentifully or adequately endowed with *this world's goods*. In theory almost everyone would be prepared to admit that comfortable circumstances do not always bring true happiness and that they are not necessary for it. But as in so many other cases, practice is here very often little guided by theory. For many who know in their hearts that happiness of any degree or kind does not consist in wealth, act and order their lives as if a competence or a superfluity were the one and only road to personal or family happiness. And it is no wonder that such persons, if they succeed in providing liberally for the needs of their dependents, think that they have amply discharged their duty in their regard.

That is to say, they think that a money contribution is enough to make towards domestic happiness, and that it would be unreasonable to ask them for any personal service in addition. The inordinate pursuit of wealth has dried up the springs of their own affections; and, judging others by themselves, they believe that their hearts and minds are so shallow and impoverished that money will fully satisfy them.

Whereas those who have not succeeded in raising the family fortunes out of the coil of difficulties, realising their failure in this respect, often make a fairly happy home by the geniality and kindness of their manner, which are taken by some as a more striking or convincing proof of affection than the bestowal of very substantial advantages. It is the same with the world at large; a pleasant address will sometimes carry one farther than a heart of gold concealed by a rude and unprepossessing demeanour. Indeed, the most beautiful and engaging traits of human character are evidenced and get scope in the sacrifices that fathers and mothers in poor circumstances often make for their children.

In the second place, it is to be noted that happiness does not consist in the fact that *illness* or *delicacy* is a stranger to the family circle. Good health is a great blessing from Almighty God; but ill-health, made an occasion of Christian patience and resignation, is a still greater blessing. Illness or delicacy borne with the conviction that whom the Lord loves

He chastises is a great grace for the individual visited with it, and will take him up many a rung of the heavenly ladder.

Moreover, nothing is better calculated to evoke exquisite and refined feelings of affection and sympathy from the rest of the family than to see one of their number bearing his suffering in patience, and perhaps making light of them, in order to save them pain. Sickness is robbed of its sting and even the prospect of death of its venom, by the devoted care and forgetfulness of self shown towards an invalid by the female members of the family, as well as by the less delicate and refined, though no less deep and keen, affection of its male members. An invalid in a house—even a fractious one—is often a kind of guardian angel keeping the members of the family together, inducing them to work for the common good, and acting as a focus for their thoughts and affections.

In the third place, it may be well to emphasise the truth that domestic happiness is quite separable from and independent of *popularity* or *social position*. Some people cannot see this, and consider that the height of happiness for themselves and for their families is conditional on social success or advancement. They think, unless they are in the public eye, and play their part on the public stage before an audience—great or small—that they can have no satisfaction or contentment with their lot.

This very often explains the heart-breaking efforts to get public positions to which no emolument is attached. An undignified and mean scramble for salaried posts can be very easily explained by the solid advantages attaching to them. But as for others, the craze for vulgar display or ostentation is responsible for the fevered pursuit of them. It is true, though, that the individual concerned do not always covet or court public attention or appreciation for themselves; because they simply wish that the sun of public notice and favour would be reflected from themselves on their families.

Now happiness, whether for an individual or for his family, based on being in the limelight is very fleeting or insecure and unsubstantial. The more self-sufficing a family is, the easier it is for them to retain or secure happiness. And the bigger the circle from which they draw the materials of their happiness, the more likely are their lines of communication to be interrupted.

So that happiness dependent on the verdict of the public at large or of one's neighbours is purely superficial having no roots but in their fickle favour. Whereas, on the contrary, it is by an ordinance of Almighty God Himself that the members of a family are required to contribute to one another's enjoyment. A person can get deeper and calmer pleasure and contentment in the hearts of his own family than in either the tepid or the boisterous embraces of a public body or a public meeting.

And it often happens that the fewer ties a man has with outsiders the stronger and the closer are the ties that bind him to his own. For although goodness and love are not self-centred, but naturally spread their fragrant odour and gracious influence in all directions, still, there is a real danger that one who is over-anxious to shower his care and attentions on the public, may not be able to concentrate enough of them on those who have the first claim to them.

It is not then either riches, or health or popularity that makes a family truly happy. A life full of troubles and disappointments may, nevertheless, be a signally happy one for a family, if it brings them nearer to God, and strengthens and sanctifies the bonds that unite them; just as there is generally, more real happiness for the individual in some humble capacity than is got from the glittering prizes of life.

Coming now to the question of what domestic happiness *does* consist in, I think it is fair to say that, though it is not identical with peace, peace is the foundation of it, and that there can be no genuine happiness without peace. For the fruit of happiness, like the fruit of justice, is sown in peace.

CHAPTER II

PEACE AND CONTENTMENT IN THE HOME

“WITH three things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and men The concord of brethren, and the love of neighbours, and man and wife that agree together” (Ecclesiasticus xxv,1,2). Looking at the matter from a merely temporal or worldly point of view, there are few greater blessings that God can confer on us than peace.

Now if peace in the human heart be real, and not a mere counterfeit, it must rest on one's consciousness of being in the

grace and favour of God. Accordingly, in its character of a composite benefit, covering the two aspects—spiritual and temporal—of our lives, we are naturally prepared to find that peace occupies a foremost place in the gifts which we are expected by God and the Church to pray for and secure for ourselves. Nor are we mistaken.

For on the first Christmas morning the primary significance of Our Blessed Lord's coming, namely, to give glory to God was closely linked by the angels with its significance as a foreshadowing and introducing a reign of peace to men. "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." And this benefit from Christ's coming is natural for "God is not the God of dissension but of peace," and His peace passes all understanding. And peace was Our Lord's Easter gift to His disciples on the evening of His Resurrection.

In the Canon of the Mass—the most solemn part of it—peace is asked for repeatedly *in so many words*. Again, in the Missal a special Mass is appointed in order that we may beg peace the more effectually from Almighty God; and this Mass is one of three ordered to be said during the great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of the Forty Hours' Adoration.

Finally, when our dear ones leave us, one of the prayers put into our mouths by the Church for them is that they may rest in peace. "The peace of God is over all the face of the earth"; and if our deceased friends are in peace, it is because they are happy in the enjoyment of God. Better is a dry morsel with joy, than a house full of victims with strife."

Now it is only the peace of Christ—that peace which the world cannot give—that can bestow either true rejoicing in the hearts of individuals or true happiness in the home to which they belong. One who knows that he is in the state of sin and an enemy of God can have no peace or ease of mind but what is forced and fictitious. The wicked man flees when no man pursues. And any cheerfulness he affects is hollow and insincere, merely a thin covering over the fear of God's judgment—perhaps to come soon and sudden.

So the well-meant efforts of a person conscious of a grievous sin to promote happiness in the family circle, cannot be as hearty or as sustained as if the joy and cheerfulness that come from the peace of Christ were in his heart.

The Pope in proclaiming the Jubilee of 1933-34 declared that the aim of it was the peace of souls, "but with that peace one can also hope for peace in every field."

Besides sin, there are other enemies of domestic peace in the shape of a short or morose temper, a sharp unguarded tongue, and an inclination to form too high a standard for others and to expect too much from them. How to attack and overcome these enemies of peace and happiness we shall see in later chapters.

But although peace is the root of domestic happiness, taken by itself apart from the fruit and flowers that it tends to produce, it is not identical with happiness. To attain this we must approach still more closely to the pattern laid down for us by the Holy Family at Nazareth. For the crown of peace is unity, harmony and cheerfulness. The family should dwell together not merely in peace but in unity. It was unity and not merely peace that was characteristic of the home at Nazareth. And it was not only peace, but unity, that Our Blessed Lord wished to mark the intercourse of His followers: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that. . . you be perfect in the same mind, and in the same judgment."

CHAPTER III

UNITY AND HARMONY IN THE HOME

NOW THE unity that should distinguish a Christian family is unity both of mind and of heart in the members of it. And if they have this, their happiness is *in substance* independent of external conditions and circumstances, and is comparatively little at the mercy of these or of what the world outside the home says, or does, or thinks.

So far as having *unity of heart* is concerned, this simply means that the natural love existing between those who compose the family is to be regulated, purified and ennobled by the love of God. Consequently, unity in the matter of affection does not mean, in the dealings of the father or mother with the children, that all their whims and vagaries will be gratified. It does not mean overlooking their faults or indulging their wayward impulses. Nor does it mean providing them with what may satisfy or please them for the moment, irrespective of whether this will be for their advantage in the long run.

On the contrary, the bonds of enlightened Christian affection constrain parents to take long views in regard to the prospects of their children. They must even at the cost of a temporary interruption of the smooth current of domestic joy and harmony, train them in the virtues, supernatural and natural that will make them holy, and as successful as may be God's Will in the walk of life to which He calls them. In other words, the unity that ought to permeate the family relations, and enable them to bear stress and strain, must not be a matter of vague sentiment, or the unruly issue of passion. It must be guided by reason and faith, and inspired by natural love and charity.

There must be *unity of mind and judgment* in the Christian family. From this it follows at once and as a minimum that all its members must have the same spiritual outlook. Accordingly there is not much prospect of peace or happiness in a mixed marriage. Apart altogether from the danger of the Catholic becoming a pervert, or at any rate becoming cold or indifferent; and, apart from the difficulties so likely to arise about the training of the children, there can be no happiness, for there can be no unity or sympathy or harmony between the couple, when the point of view they take on the subject of religion, the most important of all matters, is different.

Instead of there being any real concord or any genuine family spirit, the most that can be expected is a sort of neutrality, and a state of constant watchfulness on the part of the pair lest either may by word or act wound the deepest and tenderest sensibilities of the other. No real happiness can be built on such an artificial and insecure foundation.

In temporal matters *of importance* to the family the more the parents and children share the same viewpoint, the less heat and friction are generated when their likes and dislikes are brought into contact or conflict.

On the other hand, the policy of having a family with a dead level of views and sympathies is thoroughly unsound, and may result in practice in producing a dead level of inferiority. In some households a very determined, though well-meant, attempt is made to silence if not suppress, the characteristic view of individuals, so that the members, though many, have only one mind, that of the predominant partner. If the theory of unity is carried too far in this way, it is fatal not only to originality but to all genuine harmony or happiness.

In matters of worldly importance that concern the family as a whole, when all reasonable views are heard and weighed; if there is a divergence between them, and no accommodation is possible it is the voice of the husband or father that must prevail: because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is head of the Church. And his decision must be accepted, not only in a spirit of sullen submission, but with cheerfulness and readiness, as the voice of God's representative. The maxim of St. Augustine is a good working one to guide the making of domestic plans, and the conduct of domestic discussions: "In things that are necessary—unity; in things that are doubtful—freedom: in all things—love."

There is one matter especially which is of great consequence to the children, and in which it might happen that parents would go beyond the limits of their rights or duties in an attempt to mould with a somewhat rough or arbitrary or cunning hand the dispositions or intentions of their children, according to a pattern approved by themselves. This matter is the vocation or calling in life that a child is to follow. Any intrusion of authority here or any high-handed methods are likely to be not only destructive of peace and unity in the home, but they may be ruinous to the child's future happiness, and a serious handicap to him in working out his salvation.

According to the last Synod of Maynooth, "while parents should be consulted about the marriages of their children, neither parents nor family combines should be allowed to defeat the natural and reasonable rights of the young."

In discussions on the future of their children the role of a parent is that of a prudent conscientious adviser and helper, according to his lights and capacity. To act the part of a master, not to say a tyrant, is a complete misuse of parental power, and a usurpation of authority in a domain where Almighty God has allowed liberty. And in this matter constant nagging and importunity to stimulate or stifle the likes or dislikes of a son or daughter are just as bad as violent overbearing measures that can be brought into play only occasionally.

When the question of the vote for women was a live issue, one of the objections made to giving it, was .that in casting it, or in taking part in the activities usually connected with casting it, they would neglect their household work and duties. It used to be pointed out also that, if a husband and wife took different or opposing sides in local or national politics, they would bring their differences in the hustings or in the political arena into the family circle, to the prejudice of harmony

and happiness there. However, at any rate in our own country, neither of these dismal forecasts has been realised. For the political emancipation of Irish women has not made them forget the warning of St. Paul that they ought “to be discreet, chaste, sober, having a care of the house, gentle, obedient to their husband, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

If housewives try to imitate even afar off the “valiant” woman of Scripture, they will not have much time to devote to external occupations; but there is no doubt that they will do a great deal to secure unity and harmony in their homes. “Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her. The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils. She will render him good and not evil, all the days of her life.

She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands. She is like the merchant’s ship, she bringeth her bread from afar. And she hath risen in the night, and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens. She hath considered a field, and bought it: with the fruit of her hands she hath planted a vineyard . . . She hath tasted and seen that her traffic is good: her lamp shall not be put out in the night. She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle. She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor. She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow: for all her domestics are clothed with double garments . . . Her husband is honourable in the gates, when he sitteth among the senators of the land . . . Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day” (Proverbs xxxi, 10-25). - - -

CHAPTER IV

SOME HINDRANCES TO HAPPINESS

ALTHOUGH MAN is intended by Nature for society, some people are very far from being social or sociable in their habits or dispositions. This defect, next to the commission of a gross or habitual sin such as drunkenness, tends to make a person rather a misfit for domestic life, and requires constant watchfulness on his part if his uncongenial temper is not to cloud the brightness and cheerfulness of the home.

An over-reserved or a morose disposition is sometimes the result of sheer selfishness. The person afflicted with it wants to go his own way and to keep absorbed in what concerns himself; and in the process he is indifferent to the pain or distress his coldness or selfishness may cause to others. According to the practice if not the theory, of such people everyone is for himself, and no one is his brother’s keeper. And any hint to the contrary is met with a surly answer, if it is met with one at all.

In the ease of others, their unsociable disposition or manner is not the rank growth of selfishness, but is simply due to the fact that they do not see or realise the rights of those with whom they come into contact. They take for granted that their view-point is shared by others, and that what they like, or what they think is good for themselves, is for the general good. They would not wilfully hurt the feelings of the members of their families; but they forget that these probably have personal tastes and needs quite different from their own.

People with such a character—natural or acquired—that they do not recognise or allow for the independent personality of those they meet, are not likely to be a great success when they play the lone hand. But unless and until they correct this very unwelcome trait of character, they are quite out of place as heads or responsible members of a family. A somewhat similar result may be traced to fussiness or undue solicitude on the part of a husband or a wife to save the other partner from business or domestic worries. The husband or the wife sometimes takes on almost the entire management of both the internal and external affairs of the family. Controlling the detailed working of the whole *menage* in this way—however good the motive may be—reduces the standing of the other person to a cipher, or a rubber stamp, as the phrase is at present. If one of a couple is relieved of all trouble and responsibility, he or she is by that very fact robbed of independence, and deprived of a powerful incentive to promote the ‘well-being of the family.

Even apart from a more or less sour or sullen demeanour, if one member of a household assumes habitually an attitude of gloom or depression, this tends to chill and damp down the enthusiasm of the others for the common good or common happiness. Whereas the seeds of affection, sociability and happiness are likely to develop rapidly in a sunny atmosphere.

A short and peevish or even a touchy temper is also a great blemish of character, particularly from a community point

of view. It not only upsets the person's own peace of mind and equilibrium of judgment, but it upsets the household as often as it is given vent and even oftener; for one can never be sure that it will not flare up for little or no cause. Exhibitions of such a temper detract from or completely neutralize a great deal of kindness or benevolence in the minds of those who have seen them or suffered from them. If a person could confine the seething or conflagration of ill temper to his own breast, it would injure himself alone. But an ill-regulated tongue often goes with an ill-regulated temper. And many a word, the sudden and unexpected outcome of bad temper, rankles in the mind of the person to whom it is addressed, and sows there the bitter seeds of hatred or hostility. Bad tempers act on each other like acid on acid. And anger often arises in one person responsive to anger in another like one beast calling defiance to another.

The incompatibility of character that sometimes exists between people who marry is so great that they are kindred spirits, only in as far as each of them is cranky and angular in disposition. However, none of these failings or defects that I have outlined is insuperable, or unlikely to yield to treatment. For with a good will and the grace of God the most unpromising material can be moulded into a temperament admirably adapted to forward domestic welfare and domestic happiness. Some of the means towards this end I propose to enumerate in the two following chapters.

CHAPTER V SUPERNATURAL HELPS

The SUPERNATURAL HELPS to enable husband and wife to regulate their mutual relations, and their relations with their children, that are most neglected are, I think, the actual graces issuing from the Sacrament of Matrimony. So I may call attention to these in, the first place.

All Catholics, when they are being married, know that they receive a Sacrament on that occasion. Many, too, realise as well as know that it then gives them an increase of sanctifying grace. But there are many who do not realise, though, no doubt, they have a vague theoretical knowledge of this, that its effects are not confined to the day of the marriage; and that it gives them actual graces calculated to help them every day and hour while the marriage state lasts.

These graces assist the pair, in spite of trials and difficulties, to establish and maintain the status of husband and wife, respectively, as the law of reason and the law of God requires. They also guide their relations towards any children God may have blest them with, and help them to bring up these in trust for Almighty God and as dutiful children of His. These graces not merely enable the couple to bear the worries and disappointments incident to married life with patience, good will and perhaps, good humour. They actually remove as well or lessen the obstacles in the path they have to tread together, by giving the husband light to see his own failings, and strength to overcome them, and by giving the wife light and strength to see and correct hers.

But the actual graces in question accruing in profusion all during life from the Sacrament do not come of themselves, and uninvited, to smooth away the troubles of the married state. In this department of the Christian life, as in every other people who wish to have graces to avoid evil and do good must ask for them. And this is the least we may do, seeing that Our Blessed Lord suffered and died to merit these graces for us. Prayers directed to tap the reservoirs of Sacramental grace have a twofold efficacy; because they not only obtain grace from this source, but they also open up other channels of grace from the mere fact of being prayers of petition acceptable to Almighty God.

It goes without saying that the frequent reception of Holy Communion and Penance, so necessary for personal sanctity, is a great aid in leading a good happy family life. For, as we have seen already, sin and genuine happiness cannot coexist. Moreover, the greater degree of personal sanctity reached by the individual members of the family, the greater will be their charity in thought, word and deed. And the more charitable they are, the more ready will each be to help the others and to sacrifice himself for them, at least to the extent of shedding the corners and angularities of his own character, and to the extent of bearing cheerfully 'with their crotchets and singularities. "Charity is patient, is kind.. beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Finally, I wish to emphasise imitation of, and devotion to, the Holy Family as a great supernatural aid to family bliss, and to family success from the only point of view that matters in the long run.

The husband or father, then, ought to try to copy the sanctity of St. Joseph. We are told in Holy Scripture that St. Joseph was a “just man.” Well, the head of the household ought to be just and fair to everyone, and especially to his own, in thought, word and deed. He should also endeavour to possess himself of the spirit of industry and zeal for work evidenced to the life of Our Blessed Lord’s foster-father. The slight or slur attaching to labour and toil as the fruit of Adam’s disobedience was removed by St. Joseph. The fact that Our Blessed Lord Himself was supported by his work dignifies and ennobles labour, and ought to be an incentive to every head of a family to work for those dependent on him. And he should endeavour worthily to represent the authority and the interests of Almighty God in the home.

The wife or mother must walk as far as she can in the footsteps of Our Blessed Lady, try to copy her close and constant union with God—her inner life of prayer—and to practise, in addition, the domestic virtues that were the ornaments of her external life.

Our Blessed Lady filled in a pre-eminent degree the roles of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, and the friends of the Holy Family. For she never suffered her life of uninterrupted communion with God to interfere with the discharge of her domestic duties. “She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle.” So the wife or mother in a Christian home ought to excel in the domestic arts; but she must not allow her devotion to them to stand in the way of the service she owes to Almighty God, or prevent her from living her life close to Him. “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised.” No matter how secular or menial her work may be in itself, she can make it a rung in the ladder of perfection by keeping herself always in the presence of God, and by offering up in His honour whatever she is doing. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all for the glory of God.”

The children, in order to contribute their own share to the happiness of the home, must imitate the obedience of the Divine Child; and, like Him, as they grow in age, they ought to grow in wisdom and grace before God and men. “Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.” Wayward children are as great a cross to their parents as dutiful biddable ones are a blessing.

Moreover, it is not only the members of a family in their individual capacities that should try to imitate the members of the Holy Family. Each family as a *unit* or a *body* must be devout to them, and put itself under their protection. There ought to be pictures of the Sacred Heart and of the Holy Family in all houses; the Rosary should be said before them every night; and each member of the household should make it a point of honour to attend, while the junior members ought to be called to a strict account if they absent themselves without cause. There can be no blessing or true happiness in a Catholic family where the Rosary is habitually neglected. For this is simply to neglect or ignore the patronage and protection of the Holy Family.

Furthermore, saying the Rosary at a fixed hour has the secondary advantage of bringing all under the domestic roof at a reasonable hour and exposes the conduct of those who may be unwarrantably absent to wholesome comment, or well-merited correction.

Our Irish families by some attraction or, rather, by some gift of God’s grace, have found in the recitation of the holy Rosary, as family prayer, something congenial to all their religious thoughts and feelings. This is doubtless one of the reasons why they are living centres of religion and morality, and why we may hope that they will always in the future be true to this high character.

CHAPTER VI SOME NATURAL HELPS

A NATURAL AID TO PEACE, contentment and happiness that a Catholic husband and wife have is the knowledge that the bond between them will endure till death. If one of them is convinced that he or she has made a mistake and has met an uncongenial partner, the knowledge that there is no way out of the distasteful position is naturally an encouragement to hope and strive to accommodate himself or herself to it, and to make the best of things.

Whereas in other communions that allow divorce on more or less easy terms, people who think that their choice has

been an unhappy one may be tempted to make mountains out of molehills, in order to have an excuse for availing of the loophole of escape from a tie that is irksome or trying, if not galling.

With Catholics, on the other hand, common sense, not to speak of Christian charity and forbearance, brings home the lesson that what cannot be cured must be endured, that there is matter for consolation in the fact that fruition seldom realises anticipation, and that the world of realities is very different from the world of ideals or romance.

Experience, too, comes to the relief of those who have their disappointments in the married state; because it shows that trials endured at the hands of the other partner are big or small or quite insignificant in proportion as one is prepared to scrutinise them closely, to be more or less indifferent to them, or to ignore them completely. The severity of an insult or an injury largely depends on the temper and temperament of the person subjected to it. With a good will and a pliable disposition we get reconciled to most things in time. Married people ought to school themselves to see and appreciate every element of good in the actions and conduct of their partners. We are all expected to take as favourable a view as possible of others. And this obligation has much greater force and is much more urgent when there is question of a person's life-partner, with whom he or she is or should be bound in such intimate ties of sympathy and love.

But even in face of actions that are annoying or provoking and that have no mitigation to take the sting out of them or in face of a habitually perverse disposition, it will help towards leniency of judgment and calmness of bearing, to remember that no one is perfect, and that the number of people approaching perfection is very small. Some are exacting by nature and are inclined to set a very high standard *for others*. And intolerant, unreasonable people of this kind, if they want to have happiness *of a sort*, should call their pride to their aid, form the high ideal *for themselves*, and condescendingly acknowledge that others cannot be as they are; that is, if they are not willing to practise Christian patience and forbearance.

Again, the words of the marriage service ought never to be far from the minds of husbands and wives that have to put up with neglect or ill-treatment, or the little troubles which in the aggregate mean so much; especially if they are inclined to rebel or be resentful. It is not merely on the marriage day when they repeat the words of the service, but during life, when soreness and disappointments are in danger of rankling in the heart, and poisoning springs of affection and good will necessary to happiness, that the parties should realise that the compact between them is that each should "have and hold" the other "*for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.*"

"Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of thy unsteady life, which are given to thee under the sun, all the time of thy vanity: for this is thy portion in life, and in thy labour wherewith thou labourest under the sun."

(Ecclesiasticus ix, 9).
