

A WOMAN'S INFLUENCE.



is with you, isn't he? Is he nice? How does he like things, and how do you like him?"

Alice moved nearer to Margaret, and taking her hand, laughingly gazed into her face.

"Yes, he is home. He came yesterday afternoon, and— Well, it is simply unendurable. Fancy the position of playing hostess to a man who feels you have taken his birthright. Yet, there are people in this place who think me fortunate. Some persons never see beyond the surface."

"Well, don't think about it, my dear," said Alice, consolingly. "It isn't your fault. I am anxious to see your cousin. His return is all over the neighborhood, of course. I'm afraid it won't please Mrs. Downs. She may think poor dear Alf's chances lessened thereby."

Alice glanced at her watch, and she has pined to a mere skeleton during your absence, Margaret."

Her contemptuous expression passed over Margaret's face.

"I do wish some one would marry him and carry him off to another neighborhood," she said. "I am so thoroughly tired of seeing him around here. He may be the paragon his mother thinks him to be, but I don't care. I don't care if he is a genius, I don't care if he is a saint. But I prefer a little wickedness to want of sense."

"Don't be sarcastic discussing Alf, my dear. He is a very nice, girlish young man, and his bank account will reach from here to the Gulf of Mexico."

"Perhaps if it were shorter he might be better," commented Margaret.

"Money causes all the trouble in the world."

"The want of it, you mean," suggested Alice, sagely. "It is a wonderful power, no doubt. It makes beauty more beautiful, virtue more virtuous, and greatness more great. The very thought of it makes me wax eloquent. Seriously, my dear, poverty is the meanest thing under the sun. Nell agrees with me there. I had a letter from her this morning, and to cheer you I will read it to you."

"How is Nell?" asked Margaret, smiling at a thought her mind conjured up.

"I don't see that plagues she painted. Have you become unappreciative of her genius?"

"No," returned Alice from the depths of her desk, where she was hunting for her letter. "But uncle is just as fond of her as ever. Here's her letter."

"MR. DEAR ALICE: At last I am sitting down to answer your letter, and acknowledge its welcome inclosure. My head is buzzing the things I have to say, but I'll begin at the beginning. Gratitude before everything in my category. I will therefore thank you for your observations. I spell it with a capital, you know, I don't know that it is correct according to the rules of orthography, but under the laws which make us important or insignificant in proportion as we are rich or poor, it is perfectly in order. Henceforward I shall adopt it as showing my deep and abiding respect for money."

"This particular money came in quite apropos. We had been getting our summer wardrobe (I use this word advisedly, as it sounds more imposing than enumerating details), and you will not have to strain your imagination much to bring to mind the painfully emaciated condition of the family purse. It looked extremely humble, I assure you, despite the fact that poverty is always proud. But the moment your check arrived, what a change! It immediately swelled with pride, like the fabled frog whose picture I used to admire so extravagantly, and though it has been considerably depleted since, it still remains fat."

"Now, Alice, a word of advice. Keep in with the old bear and make him leave you some money for a horrible thing! The Reynolds seem to be growing poorer. I think it a decided mistake on the part of mamma and papa to have had so many children. But I have noticed that this mistake is common among poor people. I suppose they want numbers somewhere, so they make up in babies what they lack in money. It matters not to me, with us, shall go to write stories; I always did think I had a talent."

"In your last letter you mildly inquired if we liked our new flat. My dear child, the question was superfluous. Plans weren't made to be liked; not the cheap flats, at least, and those are the only kind we indulge in. Our present one is a narrow tunnel, probably a traffic broadway, but the road which is popularly supposed to lead to eternal bliss. We have daylight at each end and varying degrees of twilight in the middle, and our bed-rooms are so small that Bess, being a girl of resources, kneels upon the bed to say her prayers and prevent me from tumbling over her feet, which, to say the least, are not in proportion to my size."

"Speaking of Bess, I'm dying to know if she ever mentions Mr. Spencer in her letters to you. That man is my abomination, and I shiver at the possibility of such a brother-in-law. He likes her, I know, for he comes here nearly every night, sits in our best chair, which he has nearly worn out, and talks through the biggest nose it has been my fortune to see. Altogether he is odious, and if Bess marries him, she is no sister of mine."

"Allusions to marriage and such giddy subjects remind me of what I consider a most important piece of news. I have a devoted follower, a faithful servant, a devoted youth, with brains so few as to be scarcely worth noticing, and a bank account so long that—well, that, like charity, it covereth a multitude of sins. He is so enraptured with me, that my red hair is golden in his eyes, from which fact you may estimate the extent of his admiration."

"If he only had a little more sense, I find myself saying get morning, noon and night, but with all the possibilities that cluster around that 'if', the unwelcome fact still obtrudes itself. His mind is a vacuum, and I, like nature, abhor a vacuum."

"Sometimes I wonder if his pocket-book can fill the place where his brain ought to be. As the question is a momentous one, I shall write you the benefit of your advice. Meantime, I continue to be the sun of his existence, the star of his night, and a few other luminaries. And as, also, you must be thoroughly tired of me by this time, I will say good-by, for the present. Everybody joins me in love to you. More in my next."

"P. S. Being a woman, my letters wouldn't be complete without a postscript. So here it is: Give my love to Miss Margaret when you see her. I suppose she is as sweet and as pretty as ever, for I know her good fortune hasn't spoiled her."

Margaret flushed and smiled at this allusion to herself.

"Just as bad as ever," she commented.

"Nell will never be staid nor dignified."

"That is what mamma says. We are all a lively set. I dare say they think my nest is feathered, but—"

Alice shook her head doubtfully.

"Uncle is so overbearing at times, and so spiteful, that I feel as if I should rather enjoy his fall, and then there's grand scene. Indeed, you wouldn't laugh if you were in my place."

"There is his bell now. He is awake, and I suppose he wants me. Evidently

he's in a bad humor. Come with me, Margaret. He will want to see you, and besides your presence may be as oil upon the troubled waters."

Alice hurried off, while Margaret waited to get her hat and gloves. When she reached the head of the stairs she heard the Colonel's high-pitched voice, evidently answering some proposition from Alice.

"Go back! I'll go back when I choose, Miss. I'll not be dictated to. I'll Bless my soul if there isn't Margaret. When did you get here, child? Just now? Well, well! I'm so pestered and bothered. I can hardly see you. Come here and let me have a good look at you."

At this invitation Margaret came down the steps, and the old gentleman, despite her blushing remonstrance, took her face between his hands and kissed her on each cheek.

"So you've been away, and come back as pale as ever," he added, holding her from him and looking at her earnestly. "I believe we could have done better for you here. I'm glad to see you, child, mightily glad. Missed you like the devil. By the way, I hear you've got that young scamp with you. I don't doubt it had one foot of the train before some of these confounded tattling women published it to the neighborhood. If I were the husband of some of them, I'd—"

"or shoot 'em. What are you giggling at, Alice? Nothing? Well, have more sense. Come over and take dinner with us, Margaret. No company, you know. Only yourself and Brian, if you choose to bring him. I want to see the boy. I suppose he's grown out of my recognition."

The old gentleman disappeared in the library as he made this last remark, and Margaret turned to Alice with a smile.

"I must be going," she said. "I've left my cousin, you know, and I must not be inhospitable. Please come over soon, Alice. Miss Eaton sent her love and a special invitation."

Alice stood on the porch for some minutes after Margaret was gone.

"If I should turn prophetic," she said, half aloud, I would say— She did not complete her sentence, but, smiling to herself, went into the house.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

"FARMERS' ROADS."

A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE TO TILLERS OF THE SOIL.

United States Department of Agriculture Takes It Up—Macadam and Telford Systems—Model North Carolina Roads.

THE United States Department of Agriculture has taken up the matter of "farmers' roads," avers the Chicago Record, and Roy Stone, an engineer of the department, believes that farmers can build good roads without impoverishing themselves. On this subject Engineer Stone says:

"In the first place the road that will best suit the needs of the farmer must not be too costly; in the second place it must be of the very best kind, for the farmer should be able to do his heavy hauling over it when his fields are too wet to work and his teams are free. The road that would seem to fill the farmer's need, all things considered, is a solid, well-bedded stone road, so narrow as to be only a single track, but having an earth track alongside."

"A fine, dry, smooth dirt track is the perfection of roads; it is easy on the horses' feet and legs, easy on the vehicle and free from noise and jar. It holds snow better than gravel or stone and requires less snow to make sleighing, and where such a road has a stone road alongside to take the travel in wet weather it will suffer hardly any appreciable wear."

"The stone road, on the other hand, wears by the grinding of the wheels and the chipping of the horses' calks in dry weather more than in wet. If it can be saved this wear for an average of six months in each year, so much will be clear gain."

"The questions raised regarding this method of construction are: Can the junctions of the earth and stone sections of the road be kept even so as not to have a job in passing from one to the other, and can the meeting and passing of loaded teams be provided for?"

Mr. Stone cited the condition of the Canandaigua (N. Y.) roads as evidence that there is no sign of division between the earth and stone, and added that those who use these roads say that no difficulty is found in the passing of teams, since practically no two teams ever turn out at exactly the same spot, and no rutting of the earth road occurs.

SECTION OF MACADAM ROAD.

rough, wedge-shaped stones driven in solid.

Originally the Telford foundation was "conveyed" by laying the largest stones to form the crown in the center of the roadway and then grading down to the gutters with smaller stones, but this practice is no longer followed, for the earth is graded to form the crown as it is done in a macadam road.

The earth foundation is well rolled and then the sub-pavement is laid out with the long side of the stone set transversely. Between these stones stone chips are packed firmly and then broken stone is placed over the sub-pavement in two layers, the first layer being rolled and packed before the second is laid on.

This layer of broken stone forms the intermediate course, for the surface is made of stone broken in smaller pieces and packed under a light roller. Sand is swept over the surface and another rolling with a heavier roller completes the pavement. The sand is moistened and the rolling is continued

SECTION OF TELFORD ROAD.

the sand can no longer be driven in between the broken stone. Drains are laid, as they are for macadam roads, before the sub-pavement is built.

A simple experiment, which can be made with any wheel, will show why a smooth, hard-surfaced road makes hauling easy for a horse. On such a road the roadway is tangent to the circumference of the wheel. The wheel stands on the immediate point of contact, and there is no obstacle over which the wheel must be lifted. On a sandy or loose, soft earth road the wheel sinks into the roadway. To draw the wheel forward the earth before its track must be displaced or passed over, so that a horse, in addition to the force it must exert to draw the load, must use extra force to overcome the obstacle in the path of the wheel.

In Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, the systematic improvement of roads has made progress for nearly fifteen years. The general plan adopted was to start at the city limits of the county seat and to grade and macadam all public roads from this point out toward the township and county limits. These roads have a width of forty feet for the first two miles from the city limits and beyond this point a width of thirty feet.

The average cost of these roads, including the macadamizing and grading, is about \$2000 a mile. The efficiency of the roads is shown by the illustration, copied from a photograph. The wagon loaded with twelve bales of cotton weighs 6000 pounds, and each of the other three wagons is loaded with a cord of wood.

Much of the road building in this county is done by convicts. The average number of convicts employed is about eighty, and the average cost of this labor per convict, including food, clothing, medical attention and guards, is from twenty to twenty-two cents a day.

The rate of taxation in the county is eighteen cents on \$100 worth of property. In addition each township levies a tax varying from seven to fifteen cents on each \$100 worth of property. The law requires all able bodied citizens along the public roads to labor four days of each year on the public roads or to pay fifty cents a day in lieu thereof.

This class of labor is used independent of the convict labor, principally in the work of grading or in the general repairs of those roads or portions of them upon which the convict force is not engaged.

Where Water is Scarce.

Water is so scarce in South Africa that it is dealt out by the gallon, the allowance to each person working for the mining companies ranging from one to one and a half gallons per day. This limits the drinker of tea and coffee to one cup, while if stronger stimulants are indulged in they are swallowed without. Warming is a luxury, clothing being submitted to the action of sunshine and air, with a good shaking, after the manner of carpets, to get rid of the dust.

STEAM-HEATING.

Recent Advance in This System of Warming Residences.

With its many early imperfections steam-heating was slow in coming into favor, and there are to-day many worthy persons who hold a rooted aversion to it, based upon unhappy



PERSPECTIVE VIEW.

experience. It is not difficult to understand the reason for this when one visits a building equipped with a steam-heating apparatus of a score or more years ago. The temperature is scarcely even bearable, for with the steam turned on the rooms become torrid; if it is turned off they become frigid, and there seems to be no happy medium. Added to this very vital objection, the thumping and clanging is enough to craze a person of nervous susceptibility.

In view of the splendid results that are now obtained in steam-heating, it is needless to say that these faults are not due to the system, but to the ignorant application of it. Where the heat cannot be properly and perfectly regulated there has been no scientific adjustment of heating surface to the cubic dimensions of the room. In many buildings that have been equipped with the apparatus, subsequent to their erection, there are hundreds of feet of steam pipe exposed, because it was impossible to carry them from floor to floor and from room to room within the walls. The radiators themselves have sufficient heating surface, while the steam pipes are responsible for the over-heating. The architect of to-day settles this difficulty in his plans. If the matter is left to him, steam-heating becomes a delight to the householder, as it gives sure and equable temperature in the utmost extreme weather, and at a minimum cost for fuel.

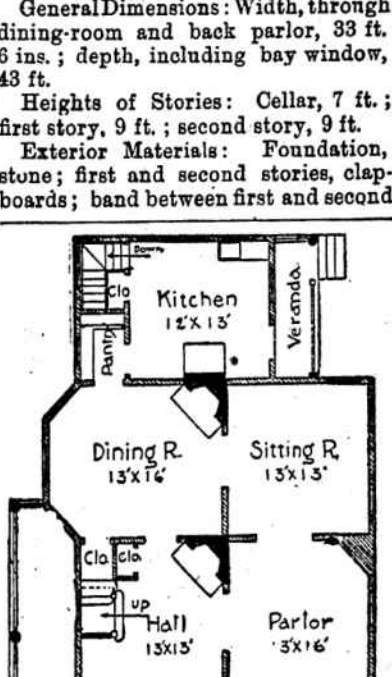
The thumping in the radiators, which forms a prime objection to the system in the mind of those who remember the experimental stage of steam-heating, is entirely obviated by the use of improved apparatus. It is caused, of course, by the condensing of steam in the radiators, and when this water is properly conducted back into the boiler the system is as noiseless as hot air or hot water heating.

The accompanying design is for a country villa in which the plans call for a simple and inexpensive steam-heating plant.

General Dimensions: Width, through dining-room and back parlor, 33 ft., 6 ins.; depth, including bay window, 43 ft.

Heights of Stories: Cellar, 7 ft.; first story, 9 ft.; second story, 9 ft.

Exterior Materials: Foundation, stone; first and second stories, clapboards; band between first and second



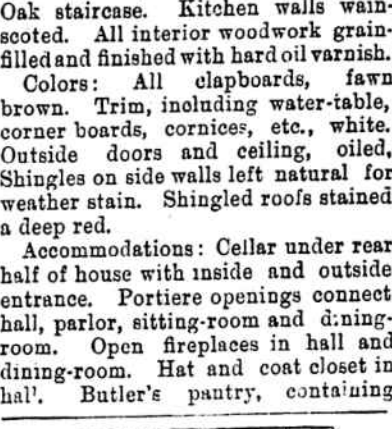
First Floor

stories, band under eaves, gables, dormers and roofs, shingles.

Interior Finish: Two coat plaster, hard white finish. Flooring and trim in hall, oak; elsewhere, N. C. pine. Oak staircase. Kitchen walls wainscoted. All interior woodwork grained and finished with hard oil varnish.

Colors: All clapboards, fawn brown. Trim, including water-table, corner boards, cornices, etc., white. Outside doors and ceiling, oiled. Shingles on side walls left natural for weather stain. Shingled roofs stained a deep red.

Accommodations: Cellar under rear half of house with inside and outside entrance. Portiere openings connect hall, parlor, sitting-room and dining-room. Open fireplaces in hall and dining-room. Hat and coat closet in hall. Butler's pantry, containing



Second Floor

dresser, connects kitchen and dining-room. Portable range and sink in kitchen. Bath-room in second story, with full plumbing. Attic unfinished, except for storage purposes.

This house would cost about \$3995—not including the heating apparatus, range and mantels—built within 100 miles of New York City, although in many sections of the country the cost should be much less, where labor or materials are cheaper.

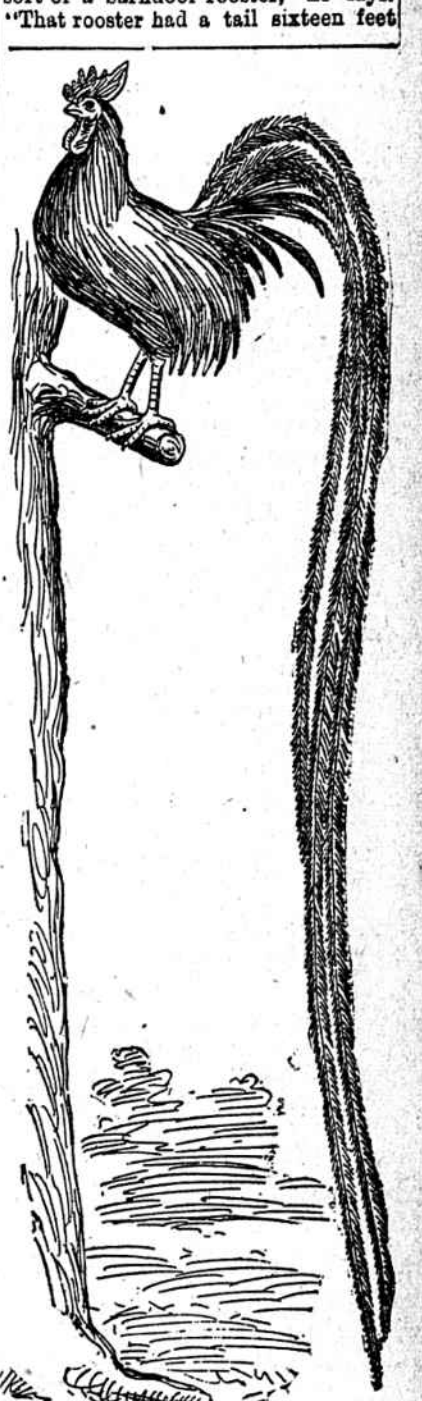
Radiators should be placed as near the windows as possible, and in all rooms but the kitchen, including the bath-room and lower hall. A fair estimate for the apparatus complete, set, would be about \$290.

(Copyrighted 1896.)

A FEATHERED CURIOSITY.

It is a Rooster With a Sixteen Feet Long Tail.

The Japanese are a fun-loving people and they are as full of tricks of various kinds as an American school-boy. A writer who recently returned from Japan tells of a queer rooster he saw on the Mikado's Island. "The only thing in the shape of a live, physical freak that ever came under my observation was a common, everyday sort of a barndoor rooster," he says. "That rooster had a tail sixteen feet



ROOSTER WITH A LONG TAIL.

long and thought he was 'some pumpkins.' Nevertheless, he was a fraud, a snare and delusion. He strutted about with the self complacent air of a peacock, notwithstanding that he must have been aware of the fact that his tail was composed of plumes begged, borrowed or stolen from the casual appendages of other roosters. That tail certainly was a marvel of ingenuity. The feathers were so cleverly joined one to another as to defy detection, except on the minutest of scrutiny. Yet the owner of the bird could take off and put on that wonderful tail whenever it pleased him to do so."

Philadelphia Press.

A Feline Fireman.

There's a remarkable cat in this city called "Tootsy." She is the only fire cat in the land. Tootsy is a member of Engine Company No. 27, and all the firemen love her. She was born on the Fourth of July, has been in the cat show, rides on the engine, sitting on the driver's seat, and loves the smell of smoke as much as she does a dinner of live mouse. Nothing could induce the men of No. 27 to part with their pet. Tootsy knows an alarm of fire, even if she hears the gong strike when she's a block away. When Tootsy dies there will be sorrow of the genuine kind in the engine house of No. 27.—New York Record.

His Imperative Duty.

A lady, en route to the last Queen's drawing-room, in London, found herself blocked in a line of carriages containing people who had not the entree to which she herself was entitled. Much annoyed, she leaned out of the carriage window and said to a policeman on duty there, in imperious tones: "Perhaps you don't know that I am the wife of a cabinet minister?" "I couldn't let you pass, ma'am," he calmly replied, "even if you were the wife of a Presbyterian minister."—Argonaut.

Fireproof Paper.

An inhabitant of Berlin is responsible for the invention of fireproof paper. A considerable quantity of asbestos fiber of the best quality, with several other ingredients, is mixed with the ordinary wood pulp, with the addition of some lime water and borax. The paper thus produced will resist the direct influence of a flame and can be placed even in a white heat with impunity.

The Largest Dam.

The largest dammed body of water in the world will be secured by the building of a dam at Cloquet, Minn., on the St. Louis River, 900 feet long and eighty feet high, by which backwater will be extended sixty miles.—Current Literature.

Great Botanic Garden.

The botanic gardens of the Jardins des Plantes, Paris, includes about seventy acres. The plants are all labeled with red labels, medicinal green for alimentary; yellow, for ornamental purposes; blue, for art, and black, for poisonous plants.—Current Literature.