

'better to marry a bad man and reform him,' I ask permission to say that the risk is too great, as carefully collected statistics have proved that only one man out of every ninety-eight and one-half ever reforms. The accusation that any one who takes this risk is a fool is not easily refuted. Another man possessing, perhaps, equal ability with yourself in making wise remarks said:

"As the husband is the wife is: thou are mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down."

"Then, too, the Society for the Survival of the Fittest is emphatic in its protests against foolish females or bad males marrying at all, not to mention their marrying each other. According to the well-tested law of heredity, the marriage of these two types can only produce fools and degenerates, classes of which all observant students of human nature now declare we have an abnormal number."

St. Matthew XVIII: 12, 13; St. Luke XV: 4, 7.

The Family of an Undertaker.

We have received the following letter:

"SIR,—In your cheerful generalization leading up to a grave consideration of 'the helpful little book' entitled 'The Funeral,' you, one is assured, do an unwitting injustice to a business which is, by its very nature, harmless and necessary. You say, 'We have often wondered how it would seem to be an undertaker.' Why say this? Why wonder, when you conclude your paragraph with this positive non-wondering statement: 'Gradually they come to regard themselves as apart from other men,—and so, perhaps, they are, as a sexton is, or a hangman'? How do you know they so come to consider themselves any more than every man comes to consider himself as apart from other men, aside from his natural dependence on both the living and the dead? Who can claim that dependence in a greater degree than the undertaker?

"Then, O generalizer! you confess: 'Of the undertaker's home life we know practically nothing.' That is a very fitting confession. You place yourself beyond absolution, however, by your questions following:

"Does he romp with his children?"

"Does he ever have any children?"

"As a matter of fact, did any one ever hear of the son or daughter of an undertaker?"

"Now, the children of Mr. Mould no doubt would have worn black mittens in the cradle if only Charles Dickens had thought of it. But the Moulds were cheerful people. I am sure you are glad you met them.

"It so happens that I once knew an undertaker who was a gentleman; a man who had the respect of the community in which he lived. He left a fair name to his children; and his fellow citizens few of whom are now living, knew him for an upright, honorable man. Many of his

personal charities became known after his passing. Those that are hidden may account for the smallness of the estate which he left. Those of his children whom I knew were certainly never ashamed of their father, nor the fact that his business was such as none of us would probably select, as a matter of taste.

"His oldest son, of whom, of course, no one has ever heard, carries on the business. Grandchildren of the men for whom the father conducted their last affair of consequence look to the son to do their own work when the time comes. He will do it; is doing it every day. He has not grown rich as he happens not to be a Funeral Director.

"He has no sumptuous chapel with stained glass memorial windows or other fashionable flummery. So, Mr. Editor, if you want a nice, cozy, comfortable funeral, large or small, I can direct you to the right shop. So much for the oldest son.

"The second son was a merry villain. Never have I known a more humorous, daring fellow. Friends came to him without effort. Clever with his pencil and his pen, his sketches and verses, written on margins of school-books, and, later, on menus and theatre programmes, are a well-remembered delight.

"It was he that told the story, with accompanying sketch, of one of those funeral-going old ladies who, living in a populous parish, went to the wrong funeral and had a really good time. Then finding that the funeral she desired to attend was coming down the street, she went to that and had as good a time as the circumstances allowed. If only that scrap of paper showing the church, the coming and the departing funerals, the old Frenchwoman and the fat Irish priest were in my possession, I would send it to you.

"This same son attended a masquerade as a long, lank, black undertaker, with a neat black pasteboard coffin—decorations, skull and bones—under his arm. So little was he ashamed of the business that brought him his bread, butter and gruesome jest that when last heard of he was high in the conduct of one of our great railroads.

"One of the very jolliest evening parties I ever attended was under his father's roof. The undertaker, his wife and sufficient small fry to have satisfied our Chief Magistrate were on view early in the evening, as was sometimes the case in those days when the opening of a home to guests meant hospitality. I remember no black mittens or gloomy looks, only a good, jolly evening.

"The daughter, who was beautiful, well-educated and had inherited from her French mother and Irish father both charm and wit, has made what is called, I believe, a successful marriage. She was a delightful girl, and very popular with the young men and women who were fortunate enough to know her.

"The place in which this family lived was a city where a real society existed long before some of our more pretentious cities came into existence. The social tone was taken from old French families, some of them of historic name. When one of these old French ladies,—they were all old,—gave a reception it was as if the social kingdom of heaven

were opened to the invited. The family of whom I am writing you took their place in these assemblies by right of birth, breeding, manners and education.

"Just how the younger generation are coming on, either in a social or any other way, I do not know. They tell me that the old town has changed in these days of extravagant refinement. Probably the snobs are all dead, and the old French ladies have dried up and blown away.

"You happened, you see, to ask your question of a reader who had known one undertaker and his family. So in justice to the craft with which I have no affiliation whatever, and with which I desire no early relations, I feel that I need send no apology with my reply. Instead, I wish to thank you inasmuch as the reading of your diary has brought freshly to my mind a pleasant family, almost forgotten.

"H. B. KAYE.

"EVANSTON, ILLINOIS."