

**THE
HAPPY FAMILY**

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The Happy Family by George Hodges

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BY

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DEAN OF THE EPISCOPAL
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
CAMBRIDGE



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THE BUSINESS OF BEING A WIFE



Figure 3. The relationship between the number of species and the number of individuals.

THE HAPPY FAMILY

THE BUSINESS OF BEING A WIFE

IN all ancient discussion of the ethics of social behavior involved in the relation of wives to their husbands, the note is set by old Hammurabi, in the earliest of extant codes of law, when he defines a good wife as one who stays at home and attends diligently to the business of the household. She is a careful mistress, he says, does not gad about, nor neglect her house, nor belittle her husband. Failing these humble qualities, he advises that she be thrown into the river. That was a long time ago, about 2250 B. C.

It was a man's law, as most law is to this present day. Madame Hammurabi was not consulted in the making of it. It was unjust, as legislation is apt to be when one class legislates for another class. It implied a subjection which was natural enough in a day when strength of arm was the credential of both might and right. Nevertheless, it went fairly to the heart of the whole matter. It defined the characteristic duty of the woman as the peaceful and happy maintenance of the home. Such it was, and such it still remains.

The epitaph of queens of ancient Rome—Domum servavit lanum fecit—may be freely translated, "She stayed at home and darned

stockings." It is hardly adequate, but it is admirable as far as it goes. In a world in which homes and stockings are essential to ordinary happiness somebody must attend to these essentials, and men seem to be temperamentally incapacitated for these tasks.

II

WHEN Christian, in "The Pilgrim's Progress," visited the House of the Interpreter, he found a man sweeping a room. The man was going about it with the zeal and energy with which a woodsman plies an axe upon an oak, with the result that the place was so filled with dust that Christian could not tell which was the man and which was the broom. Then came in a wise woman, who took the broom out of the man's hand, sprinkled water over the dusty floor, and with twenty gentle, expert movements of the brush swept the room as clean as the top of a polished table.

Here John Bunyan and Hammurabi and the Kings of Rome are in agreement, and join hands with all good husbands in glad acknowledgement of the providential superiority of their wives. Everybody ought to do what he can do best. Laws which are as much older than those of Hammurabi as the Garden of Eden is older than Bedford Gaol, settled the matter everlastingly. The initial business of a