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A Stronger Home

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A STRONGER HOME.

*An Address given on "Woman's Day"
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A STRONGER HOME.

A WOMAN'S DAY of any order, most of all a centennial memorial day, is hardly counted true to its real meaning without some word as to woman's chief abiding place, the home. In fact, at any gathering where women predominate, to fall back upon this one perennially fascinating topic is always in order. There are two classes, it is asserted, to be reached. The new women, as to whose intentions there is gravest doubt, need much laboring with on this point, since there are suspicions that they fail in proper attention to it. For the old kind of women,—the women who it is taken for granted love home, and are home-makers naturally—

they need to be cheered up a little, since there seems to be a conviction that their business, like business in general, is just now a trifle shaky and uncertain, and needs ordering on a new basis.

Now I can by no means cover this ground with the fluency and certainty that possess the masculine orator on such an occasion. Women are the born home-makers, we know; yet it is always man who on commencement days in colleges and universities where co-education prevails; in girls' schools and seminaries of every degree up and down the land, lifts up the voice in ecstatic picturing of what home should be, — in impassioned exhortation to these new candidates for the old profession to see that their mission is fulfilled. Sweet girl graduates look up, as he looks down, gazing absorbedly at the orator, fluent, assured, and debonair, pointing out to them their natural path in life! Home, he assures them, is one

of the three words most vital to human kind. Mother, Home and Heaven,—these are the trinity whose unity is life here and life hereafter. The ideal home! What unction fills him as he recites its meaning! What a glow of devotion he imparts as the smooth phrases fall! Home is the bulwark of the nation; the sum of all that man desires, and works for. To preserve it intact no sacrifice can be too great; to defend it from assault or attempted destruction, no effort too steady or too strenuous. "The homes of the Nation, God bless them!" ends the orator in a burst of emotion. The band plays "Home Sweet Home," and the crowd disperses, once more convinced that another stay has been firmly adjusted about the underpinning of the social structure.

Do I question the truth, the genuineness of this feeling; its right to expression? Never. But there are certain fallacies, the existence of which is seldom admitted save in our secret souls.

These fallacies, if we would have home the thing it was meant to be, must be displaced by something nearer the truth. If home is this sum of all human comfort and happiness, why is it that the working man cannot be induced to stay in it; that the saloon is the correlative of the tenement house always and inevitably? What does it mean that in our insane asylums, the largest proportion of women patients are the wives of farmers? What does it mean that from Dan to Beersheba and back again, the "Woman's Column" in newspapers, womens' clubs, and the more special form of mothers' clubs, unanimously and incessantly ask "how to keep the boys at home?" So universal is this question, that one is compelled to infer the chief office of the present home to be a centrifugal one, perpetually sending off a stream of boys, who, later on, will wipe away a tear as "Home Sweet Home" is sung. The ideal and the

real seem wide asunder. How shall we make them one?

The home in poetry, in song, in fiction, in the hearts of all men, is one thing. The home as the social student sees it in the clear white light—the search-light of scientific observation,—is as far removed from the popular delusion regarding it as pole is from pole. Yet, as the ideal is the only real, this universal thought of home must have a meaning no less vital in its bearing on our future than that other word, “mother.” Often trodden in the mire,—by women themselves defiled and made to forego the maternal function, it is none the less the synonym for all tenderness and unchanging love and faith. The mother, better, wiser, stronger, nobler,—this is the demand before men can be made better, wiser, stronger, nobler. If this be true for women and for men, who together must make home, then for that home the same facts hold. Come, then—let us reason together—

let us find out what home means. Not a word to juggle with—to spend cheap feeling upon,—but the home a man would die for—a woman live or die for through all chances and changes of this mortal life.

Heaven, we have long been told and at last are learning, is not a place but a condition. "The kingdom of Heaven is within you." So the spirit that makes home possible may exist at the bottom of a mine, or in the foulest tenement house, for its visible expression. But the evolution of a home was as strenuous and tremendous a business as was the evolution of a mother, and both mean some very serious study of biology. You all remember how Drummond put "The Evolution of a Mother," in that wonderful eighth chapter of "The Ascent of Man."

This was the most tremendous task Nature ever undertook. It began when the first bud burst from the first plant cell, and was only completed when the last and most elaborately wrought pinnacle of the temple of Nature crowned the animal creation.....

..... Is it too much to say that the one motive of organic Nature was to make mothers? It is at least certain that this is the chief thing she did. Ask the Zoologist what, judging from science alone, Nature aspired to from the first, he could but answer, Mammalia—Mothers. In as real a sense as a factory is meant to turn out locomotives or clocks, the machinery of Nature is designed in the last resort to turn out mothers. You will find mothers in lower nature at every stage of imperfection; you will see attempts being made to get at better types; you find old ideas abandoned and higher models coming to the front. And when you get to the top, you find the last grand act was but to present to the world a physiologically perfect type. It is a fact which no human mother can regard without awe, which no man can realize without a new reverence for woman, and a new belief in the higher meaning of nature, that the goal of the whole plant and animal kingdoms seems to have been the creation of a family, which the very naturalist has had to call Mammalia.

This was the final unfolding. The beginning of protective maternity was hardly more than a dumb instinct, feeling out toward the thing to come. The hunting savage, still more animal than human, stirred by the cry of the rain-pelted baby slug at her back sought some covert; a place wherein to make a nest for her young. Bare earth,—the shelter of tree or rock might suffice her own need, but the baby must have something better. So began the cave-dwelling era, the lake dwellers, the stone age;—all that marvelous story of time and the generations of time.

At last, out of cave and hut and every mere make-shift of habitation, grew bit by bit the wonder of comfort, of beauty and fitness, embodied to-day in the noblest form of human dwelling, the seal and token of the evolution of the family. This is the central fact of civilization. If the crowning work of organic evolution is the Mammalia, the consummation of the Mammalia is the Family. Physically, psychically, ethically, the family is the masterpiece of evolution. The creation of Evolution, it was destined to become the most active instrument and ally which Evolution has ever had. For what is its evolutionary significance? It is the generator and the repository of the forces which alone can carry out the social and moral progress of the world. There they rally when they become enfeebled, there their excesses are counter-balanced, and thence they radiate out, refined and reinforced, to do their holy work.

Looking at the mere dynamics of the question, the Family contains all the machinery, and nearly all the power, for the moral elevation of mankind. Feebly but adequately, in the early chapters of Man's history, it fulfilled its function of nursing love; the Mother of all Morality, and of Righteousness, the Father of all Morality, so preparing a parentage for all the beautiful spiritual children which in later years should spring from them. If life henceforth is to go on at all, it must be a better life, a more loving life, a more abundant life; and this premium upon Love means—if it means anything, that Evolution is taking us henceforth in an ethical direction.

Here then we have the masterpiece; the copy set for all mankind to follow, and in this generation, in which art and science are doing their utmost toward the betterment of men, one might fancy that the realization of the ideal was very near. But as we come closer, its lines are blurred until they become barely discernible. It is no fault of Love the master. It is because Love has so often been, so often is shut out, and tradition and custom, and fear, stand in his place, and make the model that is better known and more often seen than any handiwork of Love.

Here now come three points of which we must talk, each one a witness in the case: concerning old grave-yards; concerning farmers' wives; concerning the boys. And the first two are one.

First, then, concerning old grave-yards, and you shall not travel far. It is an old New England grave-yard deep in the Berkshires. There are numbers like it in New England, and when you have looked you will wonder as I did,

why so many men had so many wives. The oldest stones are, as age goes in America, very old; well nigh two hundred years, and they are in all stages of decay. In front are the first settlers, the skull and cross-bones typifying their summary of the meaning of life. Farther back, the cherub's head takes their place, the inadequate wings a symbol of the tardy nature of the process which made such change a possibility to the Puritan mind. And farther back still, come the tables of stone marking the governor's and the judge's resting places; the tombs made in the hillside, and the assortment of lambs broken columns and mammoth roses that bring one to the present time.

It is plain, after due investigation of these stones, that most men had many wives. They married early and they married often. "Mercy, wife of Aaron Small," dies at twenty-five, leaving six small children to mourn her loss. Phœbe follows, and comes to her rest at forty, leaving also six; and Mehita-

bel, who takes her turn, and manages to survive Aaron, finds the twelve olive branches so hard a task, that her own babies have no chance whatever, and they make a little row of graves near the other mothers, who, it is to be hoped, paid them proper attention on their arrival in that country from which they had so lately come.

Two, three, even four wives; one, the youngest of all, dying at eighteen. The men live long; seventy, eighty, even ninety, but each and all would seem to have planned for as speedy a filling of the family plot as could be brought about by any and all means save that of actual murder. How did they do it? Why did they do it? Was it all a providential dispensation, as they record on the stones, or did it dawn on any of them that under these pines was the sole resting place Mercy and Jane and many Marys had ever known.

It is at this point that speculation begins. We are told that the modern

woman is discontented, unruly, reckless; that the old days knew no such characteristics; that women who were our grandmothers went their quiet round, untroubled by the questions the woman of to-day persists in asking. In short, that content was the rule for those "good old times"—that filled the graveyard, and that America can know neither peace nor progress till her women return to the same mind. In the meantime, there they lie—those women who might tell us the truth—and never one comes back to make the why plainer for these "new women," fumbling out toward light, and dimly questioning if the grandmothers were not in the right in renouncing the struggle before it had well begun. Were they content? Had they right to be content? For an unquestioning submission to things as they are is a very different thing from the content born of the assurance that all has been made the best that conditions permit. The actual facts in the case we can gather only

inferentially. The diaries that remain to us of one and another distinguished Puritan woman, save in that of Abigail Adams, are small clue to the real feelings. Duty in its sternest aspect ruled, and the thing recorded was what one ought to feel; never what one really did feel. The only answer needed comes with the birth of the factory movement in New England and the rush of the farmers' daughters toward the mills, with their fourteen hours of work to the day. Lucy Larcom tells the story in "A New England Girlhood," and the life of the farm-houses of her time, the factory being ease compared with the homes from which they had fled.

For the colonial mothers there were harder days even than these. The colonial family was patriarchal in its nature—as to both numbers and necessities, and the industries of the patriarchal time were still retained under every roof. Even with servants, the mistress must rise by daylight and work well into the

night, if tasks were not to overlap. They did their work. They did it faultlessly well; so well that it is easy to see why each household in this old Linborough graveyard, the type of hundreds like it, had often three mistresses; two in the graveyard and one presiding in their place.

"Remember! I should think so!" said an energetic old lady of eighty-seven when asked the other day as to her opinion of conditions fifty years ago. "Why, yes, there were contented women, but I prefer the word resignation as closer to facts. My mother was happy, because my father worshiped her; yet in spite of this, the law made her only a chattel. She told me when I was grown,—I married at sixteen,—that she hoped I might live to see the time when a woman could have some share in what she earned, for, well as my father loved her, she had never had five dollars to spend as she pleased since she married him. Women loved her and told her their troubles,



this one of their moneyed helplessness, being one of many. To her, it seemed, those old times often held a despair that is seldom part of the case to-day, when everything is changing for the better and hope is in the air. Don't I remember, indeed! There was my beautiful aunt, whose husband kicked her out into the snow one winter's night in one of his periodical sprees. He had done it before, but this time she would not go back. Yet the law gave him the fortune she had brought him and the three children, and she ended her days in an insane asylum because she could not get them. No, my dear! Thank God you live to-day and not a hundred, much less two hundred years ago, and every day will give you more cause for being thankful. It is a better time for every soul on earth, and this thing you call the "good old times," is a dreary humbug that might better be buried and done with. Give me the new times, and the new man too, for he is coming along, side by side with what

they call the new woman, God bless her! He doesn't know it, this thick-headed male thing, whom we taught how to lay burdens upon us. Why should we rail at him, when it is all the work of our own hands? But he is being made over, no less than the rest of us, and all at once there will be a reconstruction of the world, and oh, my dear, what good times there are going to be!"

This is the testimony of the old graveyard, or a line or two of it, the farmer's wife being an integral part of the whole. Let us see if fate is kinder to her to-day than in that remote one in which modern improvements had not dawned. It has been my fortune to know her and know her well, under all aspects, from Maine to California. And on one memorable day I saw her by hundreds at once, and this is how:

There was a monster picnic, a picnic of some three thousand men—the "Modern Woodmen of America," National Association; for short, the "M. W. of A."—who on a June morning marched through the tree-shadowed

streets of a most lovely Wisconsin city. I had watched for this picnic. It seemed to me a token that for the over-taxed farmer whose working day must be ten, twelve, fourteen hours, had come a hint of something better, with Robin Hood as its direct ancestor.

"In summer-time when leaves grow green,
When they do grow both large and long,"

these serious-faced men had suddenly come to some sense of what the deep woods and the life of the woods might mean, and banded together to seek a holiday of the olden time. And if they stood as successors to Robin Hood, no less must there be successors to Maid Marian. At last the farmer's wife was to have her chance, and turn her back on cook stove and wash tub and hie her, too, to the woods—babies and all.

I watched the march of three thousand, some of them the stalwart men our Maine and Minnesota and Wisconsin regiments showed in the war, the woodmen whose business is with the giant pines of those regions, not to save but to destroy. Their symbol

was the axe, and they bore it, as the destroyer would naturally bear it, edge forward, half defiantly, half as a burden laid upon them by a fate mysterious and inescapable. For most of them was that steady, capable American countenance, or its counterpart in the long-assimilated northern men of all that Scandinavian country which pours itself into ours. But there were hundreds on hundreds in that long procession, neither very big nor very well fed, leathery skinned, bowed shouldered, rounded backed, stiff jointed; all the tokens of that grinding toil no man so well knows as the Western farmer, struggling between the upper and the nether millstone of grasshoppers and mortgages. But among them all there was no token, not one faintest one, that the word happiness had meaning for them. The brass bands played; the great guns fired; the bells rang. All the signs of joy were there, save in the faces of the men for whom they sounded. Their leaders had called them together to consider the means of undoing their life-long

work, of replanting waste places, conserving such forests as remained, and otherwise reproducing most of the conditions the generations had labored hard to destroy. But none of these facts altered that major one that in the joy of the woods they had no share.

The line of march led back to the Park surrounding the Capitol, where the stands for speakers had been placed, and where crowds of wives and children had ranged themselves on the ground for the picnic dinner most had provided. Mothers were there as well as wives of a younger generation, for hundreds of tired old faces, a little stirred by the thrill of excitement, but always and unvaryingly tired, looked out on the crowd with a sort of dull and passive curiosity. Maid Marian, indeed! Was there one face there that showed capacity for letting go one minute of the burden of that treadmill from which they came? One that carried with it the peace, the power, the beauty of the deep woods and all that they may mean?

What was there? Resignation, sub-

mission, patience, all those negative virtues supposed to be peculiarly feminine and made so by the discipline of the ages. But from oldest mother to youngest wife, the one certain expression was tiredness, and the children from their teens down, showed the result; not as the slum child shows it, and yet with a hint of the same phrase we apply to them---"ill-nurtured." Why not, when the mother worked almost up to the hour that gave them birth, and took up the task again with a steadily decreasing portion of energy for transmission to the next comer? As for the training of any of the comers, it fares as it can in the unending succession of tasks that make up the life of the larger part of our population. Work on Continental soil may be as hard, or harder, but it has the alleviation of beautiful surroundings, of holidays and of minds which grasp at every hint of a holiday. But our Puritan inheritance tinges life for us all, and Americans no less than English, "take their pleasure sadly as their manner is."

Toil, care, worry; these are some of the reasons for those forlorn faces, and now comes another. On the day of this monster and rather joyless picnic, had any statistician sought the chief characteristic of the picnic dinner he would have entered ninety per cent as lemon pie. Why this choice I do not know. It is hard to carry; it runs out on the hard boiled eggs and sandwiches, and it is destructive to front breadths and all the portions of children's clothes which they succeed in using as napkins. But all this and the resulting stickiness is accepted without a murmur from the apparently deep seated conviction that only lemon pie can do justice to such an occasion.

Far be it from me, to declaim against the national institution of pie—a dish which from the old English, stalwart form of venison pastry, down to this latest production known as lemon meringue, has through many generations charmed the children of men. Pie has its own place, its own mission, even its own rights, but these cannot be expounded here. It is the woman

who makes it, whose case is up for consideration, and whose lack-lustre eyes and sodden complexion, are one of the fruits of an overdose of the article. New England, once under the rule of the three-times-a-day pie habit, is learning slowly that fruit outside a pie may be eaten with advantage. But New England convictions and habits travel with her pioneers, and as the West is simply New England turned inside out, it follows that for the West, especially the great Northwest, the pie habit has as yet no abatement, and the farmer's wife knows that each week must see a given number.

It was a victim of this order who told me that with her own hands she had, in one year, made twelve hundred and seventy-two pies. I believed her. In her house pie was, as it were, on tap. I saw the children run about with fragments of it in their hands. I saw the "men folks" go at will to the pantry shelves, on one of which, in significant nearness, stood always a box of Blank's Pills, renewed as soon as emptied. The patient, overworked author of this ser-

ies was only one of the army of which Mrs. Abby Morton Diaz has taken a clairvoyant view.

"It was Saturday morning and baking day," she writes, "I looked through the roofs of the houses and saw in every kitchen a weary woman, standing on her feet, rolling, rolling, rolling!" And she rolls to such purpose that husbands and children alike think they cannot do without mother's pies, and she spends on them the time that might have been given to acquiring some of the knowledge of other and better forms of food. What happens to her? Overworked, ill-nourished, her teeth fall out, her hair falls out, her skin grows sodden and leathery, her shoulders bow. Nine times out of ten she has never heard of a salad and is incapable of a soup, and she and her family subsist on fried meat—chiefly pork—and on pie and cake three times a day. As to the time it takes, let a woman who knows tell us:

Six hours a day the woman spends on food!—

Six mortal hours a day.

With fire and water toiling, heat and cold—

Struggling with laws she does not understand,
Of chemistry and physics, and the weight
Of poverty and ignorance beside.
Toiling for those she loves, the added strain
Of tense emotion on her humble skill,
The sensitiveness born of love and fear
Making it harder to do even work.
Toiling without release, no hope ahead
Of taking up another business soon,
Of varying the task she finds too hard—
This, her career, so closely interknit
With holier demands as deep as life,
That to refuse to cook is held the same
As to refuse her wife and motherhood;
Six mortal hours a day to handle food—
Prepare it, serve it, clear it all away—
With allied labors of the stove and tub,
The pan, the dishcloth and the scrubbing brush,
Developing forever in her brain
The power to do this work in which she lives.
While the slow finger of heredity
Writes on the forehead of each living man,
Strive as he may, "His mother was a cook!"

In and about the great cities, where physical culture and better standards of health and living are steadily increasing, the American woman shows a physique that means great hope for the future. But for the majority, after a girlhood, which for most American girls is certain to hold elements of

prettiness if not actual beauty, the large majority falls into the thin, eager, worried type or that other one which through chronic inability to meet the demands of life, passes through dejection and depression into melancholia and ends in the asylum. For them the picnic is but one phase of the dreary monotony that makes their days. These women who, at that monster picnic of the Modern Woodmen, sat in clusters, the isolation of prairie farmhouse seeming still to make a wall about them, and give a sense of loneliness even in the throng that crowded the Park,—these women had small share in the larger meaning of the day and its purpose. They were too tired to care; too inert to ask what the bearing of the thing might be, and the listless faces, the elder ones with a look of hopeless endurance, made shadow in the sunshine of that perfect June day, and filled the beholder with a yearning desire that change might come.

The isolation, the lack of human sympathy, human cooperation, the

ceaseless and most often unintelligent toil; the *lovelessness* of it all; is not this the story for the farmer's wife with its reaction on the farmer himself, all over this America of ours?

And the boys? Concerning the boys. It may be well for the city that streams of this young, eager expectant, robust life, comes pouring in, but how for the forsaken farms? Wise boys, knowing well that under all present conception of living, the farm is prison house and who make for the wide world and all its beckoning, alluring possibilities of something better than they have known. Wise boys, dropping from Puritan woodshed chamber windows, or, in this bolder generation, calmly facing grieving or furious elders with the announcement that they are going to make their fortunes. How shall they be kept at home? Friends, no man shall keep them there, no man *can* keep them there, till there dawns a new conception of life and of home. How shall the boy learn the lesson of manhood when the father has no time to teach

his own thought of what it may have seemed to him in the day when he led his young wife home and first began the home that now stands for a little more than mortgage, and the heavy struggle to lift it and get from life something of what he once hoped for from it? And for women; what does the boy know of women, save as too often mere providers of food, menders of clothes, toilers always, but speechless when larger issues are involved. The boy seldom has provision beyond subsistence. Anything is good enough for the boys. His own room, some sense of order and sweetness; how many farmer's boys have this or any other appreciable right in the home from which they flee? What even does the school teach of the union of home and the larger life of state or country? The salute to the flag is almost the first definite attempt to give our children the true thought of country and that is but the first letter of the alphabet. Beyond it lies the great book of life whose pages the boy and girl alike would turn, for it is

not alone the boys whose hearts are sick within them in the places we call home. There is no home that owns power strong enough to keep them there, either boy or girl.

And for the world to which they go, what have they for it, save the youth that will be spilled, the courage that will die as that great maelstrom, the modern city, sucks them in? Some there be that escape it, but for the most, do not the faces we meet in city streets tell their own story? For all of them is the same longing; they are working for a home, and into some future they project the strength, the love, the desire that might be the portion of today, and for today remains nothing but the dead grind.

How shall we make it different? How shall the country, the village, the town, own a life so full, so happy, so satisfying, that men will know that their deepest thought of the word is not a lie; that in a home into which has been brought every help to intelligent work, every aid that modern science can give, every joy that belongs

to art, to literature, to beauty, that might be all about us and is not, because we are blind and have not learned beauty. A man, a woman, will gladly live and work, knowing that this world has nothing better. For lack of such knowledge as makes such homes possible, our women send out from them sons, ignorant as Hottentots of the bond between home and State. For lack of such knowledge the State is devastated by hordes of hungry politicians, who having never at their mothers' knees been taught the meaning of noble politics, of noble statesmanship, are of all men most ignoble. Their mothers did not know nor think nor care, and in the sons is the fruit of this ignorance, the curse as curses will, coming home to roost.

That I, a woman, standing here to-day, tell you this, is token that the time nears when change is certain. Into these barren, desolate lives, too starved to have themselves anything to give, must come the awakening that is part of the new century so close upon us. Hour by hour grows the

knowledge that the thing that harms one must harm all; that mankind is one in its pain or in its joy; that a new life waits us when once this is realized and we work together toward common ends.

"There is only one real want in life and that is comradeship—comradeship with the divine, and that we call religion; with the human, and that we call love."
—*Camelia Pratt in "A Consuming Fire."*

A stronger home! That is what we want. That is what we must have. There are hundreds of homes where love is law and wisdom chief ruler, and the child born into them is sure of all that the highest thought can secure for him in the education of body, soul and spirit. But Oh, Friends, for the unnumbered thousands, where love is not, and wisdom has never entered! What shall we do with them?

Is this a question hopeless of reply? Never. Yet the reply I could wish to make would mean a treatise on education. Let us sum it up then in brief. Plainly it is education for all concerned. A new education—Industrial training for rich and poor alike,

and the interests which such training bring into life will go far toward keeping the boys at home.

For the home itself a new thought. As the body in which we live is the temple of the Holy Ghost, often defiled but none the less temple, so is it also true that the same power dwells with us "in so literal a fashion, that every stone and rafter, every table, spoon, and paper scrap, bears stamp and signature to eyes that read aright; 'The house in which we live is a building of God, a house not made with hands.'"

This is the stronger home and in that home may and must be seen, all the kindnesses, all the graces, all gentleness in tone and thought that "make the happy illumination, which on the inside of the house corresponds to morning sunlight outside, falling on quiet dewy fields." Read M. William Gannett's "The House Beautiful," and you will know better what I mean. Out of such homes, neither knaves in politics, nor tyrants and schemers in business competition,

can ever come. With such homes, the golden age already dawning as the new century opens, hastens its steps, and out of heaven—the heaven within us—appears the new city, the city of our God. The Stronger Home is here!

And for the woman in that home?
What is the final word for her?

A woman—"in so far as she beholdeth

Her one beloved's face;

A mother—with a great heart that enfoldeth

The children of the Race:

A body, free and strong, with that high beauty

That comes of perfect use is built thereof:

A mind where Reason ruleth over Duty,

And Justice reigns with Love.

A self-poised, royal soul, brave, wise and tender,

No longer blind and dumb:

A Human Being of an unknown splendor,

Is she who is to come!"

—*Helen Campbell.*



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