

CHOICE LITERATURE.

THE MINISTER'S WIFE.

Mrs. Clericus held up an exceedingly dilapidated pink apron, and as she gazed at it she sighed. She was not a woman given to sighing, and, moreover, the condition of the aforesaid apron was no novelty in her household; but she was tired out, soul and body—tired with clothing and feeding five healthy, growing children, and one stout, somewhat nervous man, and so she indulged in the (to her) unwonted luxury of a sigh.

Dr. Clericus, as the unusual sound smote his ear, glanced quickly up from the paper he was perusing, at the very pretty, somewhat worn face opposite to him. It had been, and was still, a refined and rustic face; the blue, steadfast eyes held a ray of light in them, and yet she sighed.

"What is it, Theodora?" queried her husband; "are you sick?" For such an unwonted, unwarranted fact as that sigh, he thought, must have a cause, and he named the most direful one that he could imagine.

A mild spasm of surprise crossed the pale ace. "No, Harrison," she answered; "only perplexed and very tired." He went back to the able review he had been reading, but that sigh haunted him, and he turned the paper impatiently over. A notice of a great convention met his eye—Sea View, the place he used to visit when a young man, where some of his finest sermons had been written; where he had first met and loved Theodora. A thought struck him; a "fancy" he called it then; an "inspiration" in the years after.

"Theodora," said he "can you be ready to go the convention at Sea View next week, and stay there until the close of the week after?"

Now this was what she would call a special providence. She needed rest and change and the salt sea spray. The children, the beach and the astounding novelty of the request, all floated in a mixed chaos through her brain as she answered somewhat faintly, "To Sea View? The children cannot be left alone, can they?"

"Well, sister Wiggs will be willing to see to them and the house, and Laura is old enough to help her."

He looked at her as she spoke. How she came to answer very meekly, "Yes, I'll go," Mrs. Clericus could never tell; but so she answered.

The house was duly swept and garnished, in readiness for the minute inspection of Sister Wiggs, and also for the careful reporting of the same inspection, the sister being of that generous disposition that yearns to share with the community at large all the knowledge acquired by her in her travels. With the soft "good-bye" of her daughter Laura, the boisterous hug of Master Tom, the wondering farewells of golden-haired Eva and sturdy Frank, and the half-smothered howl of baby Reginald (extinguished somewhat suddenly in thoughtful Laura's apron), Mrs. Clericus left the parsonage, for the first time for years, for a fortnight's vacation.

After reaching Sea View, and getting over the first rapture of rest, she began to feel lonely, and perhaps a little homesick. She had been used to the clatter and bustle of so many children, and had now only the very silent man, the Doctor, for company, and he was absorbed in visions of a very splendid address he was to deliver the next week. Alone she walked the beach and roamed the large parlours of the hotel. But on the third day came the Rev. Louis Nimbletongue. He was an old friend of the Doctor's and, better still, an old classmate, and rumour added, a former admirer of the Doctor's wife. Now she found company. He was just from a visit to her native town, and the hours were too short for the queries and comparing of notes that took place.

In two days, as he knew everybody, he had introduced Mrs. Clericus right and left with his accustomed vigour. She waked up to the fact that once she was a brilliant talker. Her pale cheek grew rosy, and her almost forgotten soft laugh was heard once more. And still the Doctor pored over his wondrous essay, nor woke up to the fact that Louis almost monopolized the society of his wife.

But at last he woke up, and this was the fashion of his awakening. He sat on the lounge of the hotel parlour, with the eternal note-book and pencil in hand, polishing for the fifteenth time an intellectual diamond, when two gentlemen just the other side of the closed blinds began the following dialogue:

"Who is that remarkably pretty woman with Nimbletongue this afternoon?"

"That is the wife of Dr. Clericus, one of the big guns of the convention next week."

"Sure of it?" said the other skeptically; "never have seen him with her once."

"Oh! he is a movable lexicon, an animated sermon mill. Don't even know that he's got a pretty wife. Nimbletongue knows it, though, and did, they say, before she married the Doctor. Why on earth do men marry who only care for a dictionary and the original Hebrew, I wonder?"

"Well, she is a pleasant and agreeable woman; a keen talker, too. Nimbletongue is a good fellow, but dreadfully careless, and talkative, and he will get her gossiped about if he don't take care." And the two arose and strolled down the avenue after the pair just discussed.

That intellectual diamond was polished no more. Dr. Clericus sat and meditated until his wife herself aroused him from his reverie.

"Theodora," said he that evening, "what are your engagements for to-morrow?"

"Nothing much, Harrison," she replied; "a ramble to the village eight or ten of us; a sort of picnic, I believe. Why did you ask?"

"Would you—cannot you arrange it so as to go with me to High Rock to-morrow. But if you would rather go to the village we will go there instead."

It was the place where she had promised to wed the now grave, but then young and ardent, minister. Of course there was but one answer to that question. The picnic en-

gineered by Mr. Nimbletongue next day missed Mrs. Clericus very sadly.

What a day the minister's wife had! They revived old reminiscences, looked at the lovely prospect, lunched on ambrosia and nectar, and neither pencil nor note-book dared to appear. The Doctor wondered why he had not talked more to Theodora; and she—well, wives know how she felt.

Somehow, after that he was with her every day. One day he actually read to her the famous address.

"How will it do?" he asked.

She praised it a little dubiously.

"What is it Theo?" he asked, anxiously.

"It is eloquent," she stammered, and then said, "could not you put a little more Christ in it, just a few texts that come so comforting to one in trouble? But I've no business to criticize a production like that, but you asked me, Harry," and the name and soft touch on his arm disarmed his somewhat wrathful spirit. He altered and vitalized the whole sermon.

The address of Dr. Clericus took wonderfully, but he was only conscious of a pair of approving blue eyes that watched every word. At last he forgot even them, and himself also, in the delivery of God's message.

The Doctor asked his wife, on the morning of their return, if she would jot down, from time to time, any special text that helped her on in life, and how it did so, and somewhat wonderingly she promised to do as he asked. The parsonage, the children, and Sister Wiggs, all gave them rapturous greetings, and the next day the minister's wife entered on the old life, but with a thread woven through it. Her husband is never so exclusively absorbed in his studies as to neglect home life. His people find a new humanity speaking to them in his sermons, an underlying current of God's love that day by day makes its power felt. Let one of the many comments on the preaching be recorded:

"What a sermon we had to-day, Samantha," said farmer Smith, as they sat at home one Sabbath evening. "He's improved wonderfully. Not quite so flowery as he used to be, but good sound gospel sermons that you can plant your foot on; and it stays."

"Yes," responded his buxom wife, "things I can think over about my work, over my washing, and they help me wonderfully. He does improve, Samuel, that's so."

"Well," broke out sharp-eyed, somewhat doubting Miranda, their only child; "he preaches just as his wife lives. I've been there sewing a week, you know, and she don't talk to me nor pray at me, but she just lives before me all the time. She's got the genuine article;" and her voice faltered as she added, "I wish I had it too, and if I do get it, 'twill all be owing to her;" and she left the room.

Miranda had been the theme of many anxious prayers, and do you wonder that her parents felt the ministers wife to be a little the best woman that every lived. Dr. Harrison Clericus never knew why Farmer Smith doubled the subscription for his support of the gospel that year, and he wonders why all his people love him so much, and listen with such earnestness to his sermon. But his people all know the reason. They are sermons with plenty of Christ in them now, and more and more is the Doctor learning to value the wise counsel and loving help of that intellectual woman and earnest Christian, the minister's wife.

THE MAIDEN'S CHOICE.

Gentle in personage,
Conduct and equipage;
Noble by heritage,
Generous and free.
Brave, not romantic;
Learned, not pedantic;
Frolic, not frantic—
This must be he.

Honor maintaining,
Meanness disdaining,
Still entertaining—
Engaging and new.
Neat, but not finical;
Sage, but not cynical;
Never tyrannical—
But ever true!

THE POWER OF INTEREST.

We have written on the power of interest, but for all that the subject will bear repetition. The power of interest is one of such absorbing attraction as to demand our earnest attention. It is one of the despotic claims upon our economical resources. It is exacting to the pound of flesh. It heeds no pitiable cry of distress, but is as heartless as the wrecker who, with his false light, leads the unwary mariner to destruction. So do the lords of interest allure with the glitter of the principal the necessitated borrower, while they calmly see enormous interest shattering his hopes upon the surest of all rocks of destruction—interest—one of the most ruthless of all the foes of political economy. Exorbitant interest tends to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few, thus jeopardizing the material interests of the many to an extent that tends to financial revolution. To show the actual working of this exhausting element, let us draw an illustration from the idea of an eminent economist. A man buys a house for which he pays ten thousand dollars. He leases it and charges the tenant seven per cent. upon its cost, clear of insurance, taxes and repairs. The rent is payable quarterly. A rate of interest of seven per cent. per annum, payable quarterly will accumulate a sum equal to the principal loaned or invested in property in ten years. In the first period of ten years, therefore, his rents build him as costly a house as the first. In twenty years his rents build three houses, in thirty years seven houses, in forty years, fifteen houses, in fifty years thirty-one houses, in sixty years sixty-three houses, in seventy years one hundred and twenty-seven houses.

In seventy years all these are built from the accumulated

rents of one house. These houses are worth one million two hundred and seventy thousand dollars, which sum has been paid for seventy years' rent of one house worth ten thousand dollars. If instead of being invested in the house and lot the ten thousand were loaned on interest at seven per cent., and the interest collected and loaned quarterly, the money would accumulate precisely the same amount as the property. Take another illustration of the power of interest: Two mechanics just come of age are desirous of becoming rich. Each is able to earn a dollar a day over and above his expenses. Every six months they invest the money thus earned at seven per cent. interest, the interest payable half-yearly. These men earn an average of a dollar a day besides their expenses three hundred days in each year, forty years and four months; their age is thus sixty years and four months. Each earns by labour three hundred dollars per year for forty years, or for the whole period twelve thousand one hundred and twenty—twenty-four thousand two hundred and forty. But the interest on their return, loaned half-yearly for a period of forty years and four months, doubling at seven per cent., paid and reinvested half-yearly, in ten years and four months amounts to one hundred and four thousand five hundred and fifty dollars and seventy cents, which added to the amount of twenty-four thousand two hundred and forty earned by their labour, makes the aggregate one hundred and twenty-eight thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars and seventy cents. The interest on the same twenty-four thousand two hundred and forty dollars earned by their labour is one hundred and four thousand five hundred and fifty dollars and seventy cents, more than four and a quarter times greater than the amount they have earned by their labour. Suppose the two men live twenty years and two months longer, that is, to the age of eighty-one years and six months, and continue to loan their money during this period, it would double the sum, which makes the total accumulation in sixty years and four months five hundred and fifteen thousand and two dollars and eighty cents. The two men do not labour during the last twenty years and two months, and expend of their income for living during that period fifteen thousand two dollars and eighty cents, leaving to their heirs five hundred thousand dollars. The above figures are placed on exhibition to correct a false impression so prevalent that large estates are the creation of speculation, or owe their origin to lucky ventures, deeds of inheritance, or other come-by-chance; but it is not so in a majority of cases, it is merely the result of moneys husbanded and faithfully applied to economic purposes, which grew to amazing conditions when allowed to accumulate. The converse of the proposition is that if the gatherer of interest accumulates so quickly and so largely, the borrower of necessity must lose or be diminished correspondingly, i. e. naively so; hence a conservative view leading to defined action would suggest a rate of interest that would be ample compensation for the investor, while it did not oppress the borrower. What this rate shall be is an open question.—*Exchange.*

THE STOCKINGS GRANDMA KNIT.

In these busy days grandma's occupation is gone. This noisy, whirring, breathless machine has quite drowned the soft, irregular click of her knitting-needle, and while the dear old eyes are looking for a dropped stitch, lost because some youngster's restless pate bobbed against the patient arm, the tireless machine has finished a long-legged stocking and is clamouring for more yarn. Grandma still sits on the south porch or in the warm chimney-corner and knits, but who waits now for the stocking to be finished? The rattling, clicking, noisy old mill, with its smell of dyes, its whirl of machinery and noise of steam, pours a steady cataract of socks and stockings on the market while grandma rounds the heel of a little one for Harry or points off the toe of a big one for Fred. Who waits for grandma's stockings now? Ah, well; we all wait for them now and then. The noisy old mill doesn't make them so warm after all. Does ever the breathless snapping machine stop to teach a bright-eyed urchin to knit a straight row on a pair of chicken quills? The wrinkled old hands, how softly they patted the cheeks of the romping grandchild, not half so soft in their childish curves as the touch of grandma's hands. The stocking grandma knit; how much love went into every stitch, how many prayers were wrought into every round. Somewhere I once read about a nun who bent over her needle work and as oft as a tear fell from her eyes upon the snowy fabric she wrought about it and worked it with her deft needle, until at last the strange design wrought out a touching story of her loneliness and sorrow. And if we could read all the dreams, and thoughts and prayers that grandma wrought with those patient needles we would wear the stockings she knit on our hearts, rather than on our feet. For here is a dream of John, and there is a tear for Chris's Robbie, and here is a plan for Will, and here comes creeping in a quivering strain from some old, old hymn that is hallowed to us now because her lips blessed it so often; see how a prayer quivered all along this round; here the stocking was laid down, while the old hands turned over the leaves of the Bible that seemed never to be out of her lap; here the old eyes looked out across the pasture and the mowing-lot down to the wooded hills where the birds were answering winds; here the old eye sleep for a few minutes, and here is a knot. Ah, yes, Phillie and Annie are home this week and the house is full of their children. There will be many more knots in the yarn before the stocking is finished. Who is the boy whose fate it is to hold on his extended hands the skew of yarn while grandma winds it off after the romping youngsters who taunt him with shrieks of laughter as they desert him. But never mind, grandma comforts him with splendid stories of Uncle Doc's pranks when he was a boy and went to school at Carmichaeltown, until the boy wishes the skew was five miles long. And then he is rewarded by a great big cookie, sweeter than honey, because he was such a good boy. The only thing that took the edge of this reward was that all the other children got just as big cookies as he did, because somehow grandma's reward for the good boy and girl managed to include all the other boys