



The Family Circle.

A PLEA FOR THE HEATHEN.

I plead for those whose eyes are bright,
For those who dwell in gloom,
On whom there breaks no starry rift
Of hope beyond the tomb;
I plead with those whose homes are fair,
For those whose homes are dim,
Oh, guide them in the way to Christ
That they may learn of Him.

Borne far across blue rounding waves,
A wailing voice I hear,
"Uplift us from this place of graves,
Alas! so vast and drear."
That call from China's crowding host
Blends with the Hindu's cry;
"O sisters of the blessed life,
Come hither ere we die!"

Turn Eastward still: the Rising Sun
Looks down on eager bands,
Sweet daughters of sea-girt Japan,
Who stretch imploring hands,
And beg with eager hearts to-day
For Christian knowledge fain;
It cannot be their earnest plea
Shall come to us in vain!

Well may we scorn or gold and gems
And brodered garments fine,
To cumber Christ's victorious march,
To shame His conquering line;
The banner of the Cross shall float
From every mountain crest,
For he must reign o'er all the earth,
By all their King confessed.

Ho stoops to-day our aid to ask,
His name He bids us wear,
The triumph of His outward path
By Sovereign grace we share;
O loiter not! to heathen gloom
Bear on the torch—His Word—
What glory for a ransomed soul
To help the Almighty Lord!

—Mrs. M. E. Scungster.

A LAY PREACHER.

BY ROSE TERRY COOKE.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Simmons, shaking her head. "I don't know what on air Mr. Styles's folks will do. She's dreadful delicate, and he's got dear knows what's a-ailin' of him—ministers' complaints, dyspepsia, 'nd suthin' or nuther in his throat; and there's them two peepin', miser'ble children. They hain't ben here but goin' on three months, and their help's goin' to leave—don't like the country. Land alive, how notional them Irish be! Anybody would think, to hear 'em talk, they'd lived in first-class houses to home, and had the best of society and all the privileges."

"That's so," heartily returned Uncle Israel Jinks, who was leaning on Mrs. Simmons' gate, having, as he phrased it, "a dish o' talk," while three curious hens eyed and squawked about his pig's pail, filled with the morning collection, and at last, growing bolder, began to pick at the contents.

"That's so, marm; them sort of folks is like the wind—allers a-blowin'. I've observed considerable, bein' in years an' allers keepin' my eyes open; and I've allers noticed that the things folks make the most fuss over is the things they hain't got. Now, you never see in your life a married man that's by a long sight the weaker vessel of the two but what he'll be a-tellin' how he's master in his own family, how he will be obeyed, 'nd so forth 'nd so on. And I never seen a gossipin' woman but what laid it on to her neighbor so fashion: 'I don't know nothin', 'nd I wouldn't say it for nothin', but Sister Smith thinks.' That's human natur', Miss Simmons. We all hear the sermon for the folks in the next pew. Human natur' is queer, queer, onaccountable."

"Well!" snapped Mrs. Simmons, who seemed to feel a thorn in Uncle Israel's illustrations somewhere, "that ain't the pint we was aimin' at. We've all got human natur' and there ain't no other natur' to be born with, so we've got to lump it. The pint is can anybody in this town be got to help Miss Styles for a spell—any-

body that'll stay till they can better themselves?"

Uncle Israel lifted his straw hat with one hand a little way, and began to scratch his head. Why some people always do this might afford a text for a physiological lecture; but we have no time to improve the subject—enough to say that by this process the old man did raise an idea, or seemed to, such as it was.

"What should you say to Desire Flint, now?"

There was a hesitating sound in the cracked voice and a glimmer of suspense in the faded blue eyes as he spoke.

"Desire Flint!!" No hesitation in Mrs. Simmons' prompt reply. "Why, Uncle Israel, she ain't no better than a fool! any-ways, not much."

"She ain't a fool; she ain't nobody's fool," was the meditative answer. "Desire's simple, but sometimes I think a good many folks would be better for a grain of her simpleness, 'nd she's real handy if you tell her just exactly what to do and how to do it. Dr. Porter said she nursed old Miss Green splendid, jest as faithful as could be, nuthin' forgot or slighted. There's suthin' in that, now, I tell ye."

"Well she does say the queerest things. You know yourself how she up and told Deacon Mather he was a wolf."

"I know, I know, she speaks in meetin' that's a fact, and she's got the Bible to her tongue's end, and she b'lieves in 't lock an' stock. Now we all know 't won't do to swaller the Bible whole that way. Where should we be if we did. Goody gracious! Miss Simmons, what if you should up an' give black Cesar half your cabbages jest 'cause he gin you half o' his early corn last year when your crop gin out?"

There was a momentary twinkle in Uncle Israel's eye as he made this remark, and Mrs. Simmons winced; but she recovered herself with great presence of mind.

"Mebbe 't wouldn't be so bad in a minister's family."

"Ministers is men," dryly rejoined the old man. To which undeniable fact Mrs. Simmons assented by silence.

"Then Desire is first-rate with children."

"She'd considerable better be fust-rate at hard work," retorted the good woman.

"Shoo! shoo! Git out o' that, you consarned critters!" squeaked Uncle Israel to the hens. He knew when he had said enough, so he lifted his pail and walked away. But the idea took root in Mrs. Simmons' mind and flourished. Poor, pale Mrs. Styles would have welcomed into her house a gorilla that could wash and iron and not live on the children as a steady diet, so in a week Desire Flint was set over the parsonage kitchen.

She did not look like a gorilla in the least. A patient, overdriven look characterized her face at the first glance. It was pale, and the cheek bones high; the mouth full and sweet, half-closing over prominent teeth, a pair of large sad grey eyes, and a high, smooth forehead, completing a visage that, after the tired look passed away, as it did when she spoke or smiled, was utterly simple; not like a child's, which has a sense of humor, of coquetry, of perception even, in its round, soft lineaments, but more like the face of a baby, that receives all things as they seem to be, that accepts but does not impart, except passively.

No doubt there was something odd about Desire. She was an orphan. Her father died before her birth, and her mother, a weak, amiable girl, left poor and helpless, died when her baby came, from pure want of "grit," the doctor said, so baby went to the poor-house, a silent, unsmiling, but healthy child, who made no trouble and grew up in ways of the most direct obedience—her great fault being a certain simple credulity that in its excess was so near utter folly that she passed for half-witted. Nothing ever made Desire lie. Nobody could lie to her, even in the absurdest way, and not be believed. She was teased and tormented at school till all the boys and most of the girls found it too easy of doing to be an amusement, and conceived a dull sort of respect for a girl who was too simple to comprehend unkindness or evil. The only book that fell into her way at the poor-house was her father's old Bible, that had been carefully laid aside for her; and over this she pored Sundays and sometimes of a rainy day, till she almost knew it by heart and received it with absolute and un-

questioning faith. It produced a curious effect upon a character so direct as hers. All things were brought to its pages and tried as by the only standard; and all things were to her right or wrong. Her logic was stringent, her obedience instant; but it was a great nuisance to have her about among common folks! Such people naturally are nuisances, this is no world for them, and poor Desire's home at the poor-house became a permanent one. She labored there with a good will, and once in a while she went out to nurse some poor body suffering under mental illness, who could not pay for more able attendance and who was too ill to be a stumbling-block to Desire's practical Christianity and to incur her remark or rebuke; so that she fairly earned her living. But it was a great pleasure to her now to be brought into a new home where there were children; for children were the delight of her heart, and there were five of these delightful, troublesome, tormenting comforts in the Style family, besides the baby.

Poor little Mrs. Styles was a minister's wife. In her girlhood she had imagined this to be an honor almost beyond her ambition—a sort of halfway saintship, that should open the very doors of Heaven to her while yet on earth; and when she reached this awful pinnacle and became the promised bride of the Reverend Samuel Styles, a tall, pale, solemn youth, with head in the clouds, her real human love mingled with the superhuman aspect of the matter till she felt as a certain old school-master used to say, "exalted to Heaven on the point of a privilege." But when she was fairly married to her adored Samuel and set in her place as official "minister's wife" over a small parish, where the salary was just enough to starve on, and half paid at that, pretty little Nellie Styles found out that as Uncle Israel said, "ministers are men," and Heaven is no nearer their wives than it is to other people.

The Reverend Samuel had been resolved on entering the ministry from early childhood. He had been educated by a widowed mother to that end. He had been shut up, like a half-fledged chicken in a coop, in that orthodox monastery, a theological seminary, for four years; crammed with good theology and poor food; plenty of Hebrew, and no fresh air; Greek parables but not a particle of exercise; a thorough and exhaustive knowledge of the lives of prophets, apostles and saints; but no acquaintance with, or interest in, the lives of every-day people about him; a straight faith in his own creed and a sincere disgust at every other; and withal learning from the atmosphere which surrounded him an unconscious lesson agreeable extremely to the natural man—a lesson of his own importance and superiority to the rest of mankind. Thanks to the vitality of the Christian religion, which will leaven the lump in due time and stand its own ground in defiance of all the stifling and cellarage it undergoes at the hands of trembling men, terrified lest air should overthrow it, and light blast it, the ministerial training schools of to-day are far superior to those of 30 years ago; and even in their first estate there were mighty men of valor, whose broad and healthy natures defied their cramping and withstood their mildew; but this man was by nature narrow and acid, the saving graces of his character being a deep though silent affectionateness and a rugged honesty. But in spite of these traits, which needed sunshine and strength to develop them, he was turned out into the world a tolerably good preacher and an intolerably selfish, dogmatic man. Men can sometimes preach very well what they do not practice, so the Reverend Mr. Styles became a popular preacher and was exalted from one parish to another, till at last his health failed and he was forced to take charge of the church in Coventry, a little village among the New England hills, to try what comparative rest and high, pure air would do for him.

By this time Mrs. Styles had become quite convinced that the way to Heaven is—
—"a strait and thorny road,
And mortal spirits tire and faint,"

even when one is a minister's wife. She was a young thing when she married, helpless, as American girls are apt to be, innocent, ignorant, loving, and with no constitution. Her first baby was at once a terror and a treasure. She gathered it from the gates of death and held the tiny blossom in unconscious hands for many a long

day afterward; but sometimes in her secret heart she thought, as the heavy months rolled by, it was harder to live for it than to die for it.

Her bedroom was small and dark; no sun castreviving rays into its north window. There was a large and pleasant chamber on the southeast corner of the house; but—"Of course I must have that for my study," announced the minister, when they first inspected the parsonage.

Then nobody who had to write sermons could lose an hour of sleep; therefore it was the weary little mother who walked of a night up and down with the wailing child. And daily, while the sermons were in process, the house must be hushed to perfect silence, or they could never be written.

Then came another baby. And by that time Mr. Styles had dyspepsia, and not only had to have his peculiar food, but a special preparation of it. What American woman of moderate purse and aching back does not know all that this implies in our present state of domestic servitude?

"Helen! this bread is sour!" was perhaps the only word spoken at the breakfast table by the poor man, whose temper certainly had no right to accuse the bread of acidity. But he had dyspepsia—the modern shield of Achilles which wards off all darts of accusation, which covers temper, incivility, injustice, selfishness, insolence, all under one broad shelter, and accredits to the stomach all the shortcomings of heart and soul!

Children came one after another to the broken-down, feeble, sweet, little mother, two big, rosy boys, three delicate girls, and a blossom of a baby-girl, born in Coventry, and six months old when Desire Flint came to the rescue.

It did poor Nelly Styles' heart good to see her kitchen scrubbed and set in order, as she came in that afternoon with baby in her arms.

"Why, Desire," said she, "you have taken too much pains with the kitchen; you might have left these windows till another day."

Desire regarded her with a vague, wondering smile.

"Yes, marm; but I like to do things with my might. That's what the Bible says."

Helen looked at the plain, simple face sharply. She was not in the habit of hearing such familiar reference to the Bible, and Desire spoke of it as familiarly as most people do of a recipe-book. By night Desire had the kitchen cleaned thoroughly, the kettle on, the table laid, the berries sorted and washed, the milk-pitcher and great loaf of bread in their places. Mrs. Styles came to her simple meal, to find all the children washed and brushed and every thing in its accustomed place. It was in the poor little woman's nature to be grateful and kind; so she praised Desire again only to hear—

"Why, marm, I had to. Bible says: 'Let everything be done decently and in order.'"

"You seem to use the Bible language very commonly, Desire," said Mrs. Styles gravely. The great grey eyes stared at her questioningly.

"Marm?"

"Why do you speak the Bible words so often, Desire, about every day matters?"

"Oh! well, Bible says: 'Give us this day our daily bread,' I expect."

Helen was rather staggered with the quotation. Desire turned away as if there were no more to be said.

(To be Continued.)

THE MINUTES.

We are but minutes—little things,
Each one furnished with sixty wings,
With which we fly on an unseen track,
And not a minute ever comes back.

We are but minutes; yet each one bears
A little burden of joys or cares,
Take patiently the minutes of pain—
The worst of minutes cannot remain.

We are but minutes; when we bring
A few of the drops from pleasure's spring,
Taste their sweetness while yet we stay—
It takes but a minute to fly away.

We are but minutes—use us well;
For how we are used we must one day tell.
Who uses minutes has hours to use—
Who loses minutes, whole years must lose.