

The Family Circle.

GREAT THINGS AND SMALL.

BY A. R. H.

The sunshine flooding all the skies
With radiance paints the smallest flower;
When bare the land all thirsty lies,
The very clouds drink in the shower,
The dews that summer nights distil
Each blade retouch, each petal fill.

The pulsing of the mighty sea
Uplifts the little fisher boat;
The winds that sweep the grassy lea
A withered leaf will pluck and float,
And impulse as from heaven may raise
The weakest voice to notes of praise.

We may not reach the higher art,
And yet may taste the poet life,
And in its passion have a part,
To prove its bliss or share its strife:
The world's strong pulse throbs through us all,
And one life holdeth great and small.

—Sel.

MARJORIE'S CANADIAN WINTER.

CHAPTER I.

A NOVEMBER EVENING.

Marjorie Fleming sat curled up in a large chair by the window of the dim fire-lighted room, looking out into the misty grayness of the rainy November evening, with wistful, watchful eyes that yet seemed scarcely to see what was before them.

The train that generally brought her father from the city was not quite due, but on this dull rainy day the dusk had fallen very early, and Marjorie, always a dreamer, loved to sit quiet in the "gloaming," as her father used to call the twilight, and give full sway to the fancies and air-castles that haunted her brain. The fitful light of the low fire in the grate scarcely interfered with the view of the outer world, such as it was. Of the evergreens, heavy with crystal rain-drops, the bare boughs of the other trees, and, beyond that, the street lights, faintly outlining the houses and gardens on the other side. Marjorie, as she sat there, with one hand on the head of her little terrier Robin, scarcely looked her age, which was thirteen—a delightful age for a little girl; full of opening possibilities of life, and thoughts, of which, only a year or two ago, she had scarcely dreamed; an age not yet shorn of the privileges of childhood, and yet beginning to taste of the privileges of "grown-up people;" for now her father and his friends would not mind occasionally taking her into their thoughtful talks, which, to her, seemed so delightful and so profound.

As Marjorie waited, absorbed in a reverie, her mind had been roaming amid the fair scenes of last summer's holiday among the hills, with her father and her dear Aunt Millie; and latterly with the stranger who had appeared on the scene so unexpectedly to her, and had eventually carried off her beloved auntie to a Southern land of whose "orange and myrtle" Marjorie had been dreaming ever since. The bustle and novelty of a wedding in the house were very fresh in her mind, and she still felt the great blank left by the departure of the bride, whose loss to her father Marjorie had made such strong resolves to supply by her own devotion to his care and comfort. These resolves had been fulfilled as well, perhaps, as could be expected from a girl of thirteen, whose natural affinities were more with books and study than with housewifely cares; but their faithful maid Rebecca, trained so carefully by "Miss Millie," regarded the somewhat superfluous efforts of her young mistress with something of the same good-humoured disapprobation with which the experienced beaver is said to view the crude attempts of the young beginners at dam-building. So household cares had not weighed heavily on Marjorie yet, and the quiet life alone with her father had been much pleasanter and less lonely than she could have believed. For, though he was all day absent at the office in the city, Marjorie had her school and her books, and the walks in the bright October days with school friends. And then there were the long cosy evenings with her father, when Marjorie learned her lessons at his writing table, while he sat over his books and papers; yet not too much absorbed for an occasional talk with Marjorie over a difficult passage in her French or Ger-

man, or an allusion in a book which she did not understand. Sometimes, too, he would read to her a manuscript poem or sketch, to see how she liked it; for Mr. Fleming was engaged in editorial work in connection with a New York periodical, and often brought manuscripts home from the office to examine at leisure. These were great treats to Marjorie. It seemed to her charming to hear a story or a poem fresh from the author's hand, before it had even gone to the printer; and she looked with a curious feeling of reverence at the sheets covered with written characters, that seemed about to fly on invisible wings to all parts of the land. As for her father, Marjorie thought that there was no one in all the world so clever and so good; and his verdict she took as a finality on every possible subject. Only one person stood yet higher in her thought; and that was the dear mother who now seemed to her like a lovely angel vision, as she imagined her in fragile delicacy and gentle sweetness, and knew, too, how her father had mourned her, and how he revered her memory as that of one far better than himself. All that that memory had been to him Marjorie could as yet only very faintly appreciate, but she knew or divined enough to give a loving but profound veneration to the feeling with which she looked at the picture over the mantel piece, or the still sweeter smaller one that stood on her father's dressing-table. Marjorie had learned by heart Cowper's beautiful lines to his mother's picture, and she sometimes said them over softly to herself as she sat alone, looking at the picture by the firelight.

She was recalled now from the mazy labyrinth of rambling thoughts by Robin's sharp little bark and whine, as an umbrella with a waterproof coat under it swiftly approached the gate and turned in. It was a race between the dog and Marjorie, which of them should be at the door first. Robin was, but had to wait till Marjorie opened the door for his wild rush upon his master, while she threw her arms about her father wet as he was, for the greeting kiss.

"Oh! how wet you are, father dear," she exclaimed. "Such an evening!"

"Yes; it makes me glad to be back to home and you, Pet Marjorie," he said looking down at her with bright dark eyes very like her own, while she tugged away at the wet coat, in her eagerness to relieve him of it. He shivered slightly as he sat down in the easy-chair which Marjorie pulled in front of the fire, while she broke up the coal till the bright glow of the firelight filled the cosy apartment—half-study, half-sitting-room—where a small table was laid for a *tele-a-tele* dinner. Marjorie looked at him a little anxiously.

"Ah! now you've taken cold again," she said.

"I've taken a slight chill," he said, a little wearily. "It's scarcely possible to help it in this weather—but we shall be all right when we've had our dinner, eh, Robin?" as the little dog, not meaning to be overlooked, jumped up and licked his hands.

"But you look so tired, papa," said Marjorie again, using the pet name by which she did not usually call him.

"I've been out a good deal in the rain, and among saddening scenes, dear," he said.

"Oh! why did you go out so much to-day?"

"I had made an appointment with an English friend to show him how some of our poor people live, and, Marjorie dear, it made me heart sick to see the misery and wretchedness, the dingy, squalid, crowded rooms—the half-starved women and children. It makes me feel as if it were wrong to be so comfortable," he added, looking round the room with its books and pictures. "And then, to pass those great luxurious mansions, where they don't know what to do with their overflowing wealth, and where they waste on utter superfluities enough to feed all those poor starving babies. Ah! it's pitiful. It makes me wonder whether this is a Christian country."

Marjorie looked perplexed. "But don't those rich people go to church?" she asked. "And, surely, if they knew people were starving, they would give them bread?"

"It's a queer world, Pet Marjorie," he said. "I suspect a good many of us are half-heathen yet."

Marjorie said nothing, but looked more puzzled still. She had heard a great deal about the heathen in foreign countries, but how there should be heathen, or even half-heathen people in a city like New York, and especially among the rich and educated portion of it, was not so clear. No doubt they were not all as charitable as they should be—but how did that make them "half-heathen?" But she was accustomed to hear her father say a good many things that did not seem very clear at first, and she liked to try and think out their meaning for herself.

"I saw an angel to-day," Mr. Fleming went on half-musingly, then, smiling at Marjorie's surprised look, he added: "But I mustn't begin to talk about it now, or we'll keep dinner waiting, and I see Rebecca is bringing it in. I'll tell you about it in our 'holiday half-hour,' by and by. It'll be a conundrum till then."

It was rather a "way" Mr. Fleming had, to mystify a little his "Pet Marjorie," as he liked to call her, after the wonderful little girl who was such a pet of Sir Walter Scott, as Dr. John Brown has so prettily told us. And it had the effect of making her wonderfully interested in the explanation, when it was not possible for her to think this out for herself. And the "holiday half-hour" was the last half-hour before Marjorie's bedtime, when Mr. Fleming was wont to make a break in his busy evening, and give himself up to a rambling talk with Marjorie on matters great or small, as the case might be. For this half-hour Marjorie used to save up all the problems and difficulties that came into her busy mind during the day; and then, too, he would read to her little things that he thought she would like—generally from his office papers. It was no wonder that she looked forward to it as the pleasantest bit of the day, and that it left happy and peaceful thoughts to go to sleep with.

They had their quiet dinner together, while the rather dignified and matronly Rebecca waited on both, with a kind of maternal care. Then the table was cleared and drawn nearer the fire, while Mr. Fleming sorted out on it his books and papers. Among them were two or three new books for review. Marjorie looked at the titles, and dipped into the contents a little, but finally decided that they "were not as nice as they looked." Then, instead of producing grammars and exercise books as usual, she opened her little work-box, and unfolded, with an air of some importance, a large bundle of flannel.

"Nettie Lane and I were at the Dorcas Meeting to-day," she explained, in reply to her father's surprised and inquiring glance. "Nettie said I ought to take more interest in doing good to poor people, as Miss Chauncy always tells us we should. So she took me, because her mother is president, and she wants to enlist the interest of all the little girls," quoted Marjorie with satisfaction to herself. "And I took this home to make up before Christmas Day."

"All right, my child," said her father, smiling. "Only try to do whatever you undertake. If it should turn out as my Christmas slippers did last Christmas, I'm afraid the poor people will have to wait a while, unless Redecca takes pity on you."

"Oh, papa! But then there was so much work on them, and you didn't need them then—just exactly. And I'm sure they look very nice now," she added, surveying with pride the slippered feet, adorned with two brown dogs' heads, which rested on the fender, while her father looked through the evening papers.

"Yes, dear, they do, and I'm very proud of them," he said, leaning over to stroke her soft dark hair with a loving hand; "all the more that I know you are no Penelope."

"O! poor Penelope had nothing better to do," said Marjorie. "I don't suppose she had French or German to learn, or any new books to read."

"Happy woman!" sighed Mr. Fleming. "Of making many books there is no end." And he looked at the pile of books and MSS. he had just laid on the table.

"O, father! I have you any stories to read to me to night?" asked Marjorie.

"I'll see by and by. I noticed one that I thought looked as if you would like it. It's

called 'The Story of the Northern Lights.' But now I'm going to work till our half-hour comes, and then I'll give myself a rest—and you a reading."

"Well, then, father dear, I think I'll put my sewing away, and do my lessons for to-morrow. When you are ready to read I can work while I listen."

Mr. Fleming smiled a little, but said nothing. The flannel was folded up with a rather suspicious alacrity, grammars and exercises were brought out, and perfect silence reigned, broken only by the turning of leaves or the scratching of pens; for Marjorie knew that when her father said he was going to work, he did not wish to be disturbed by any desultory remarks, and thus she had learned a lesson often difficult for women to learn—that there is "a time to keep silence."

"Is your exercise very difficult to-night, Marjorie?" asked Mr. Fleming, after a long interval, during which he had occasionally noticed long pauses of Marjorie's pen, with what seemed to be periods of deep abstraction in her task.

Marjorie colored deeply. "Oh! I haven't begun my exercise yet. This is my translation," she said.

"And do you find it so difficult to make out?"

"O, no! not difficult to translate; only I thought I would like to do it, you see it's poetry, and so"—

"You wanted to translate it into verse?" he continued.

"Yes; I've got the first verse done."

"Well, let me see how you're getting on."

He took the sheet of paper which Marjorie handed him with a mingling of pride and nervousness, and read aloud:

—"Know'st thou the land where the citron-trees grow,
Through the dark leaves the bright oranges glow;
A gentle breeze blows from the soft blue sky,
The mild myrtle is there, and the laurel high;
Say, dost thou know it?"

There, oh there—
Let me go with thee, Oh, my beloved, there."

"Well, it's not a bad translation for a little girl to make, Pet Marjorie," he said, kissing the flushed cheek. "But you know 'there's a time for everything.' Your work just now is to learn German, not to play at translating it—half by guess. You should keep such things for your playtime—not waste your lesson time on them. I don't in the least object to your trying what you can do in this way at proper times and seasons, but you know I don't want you to get into a desultory way of working. It is a besetting sin of temperaments like yours—and mine," he added with a sigh.

"Yours, father?" said Marjorie, in astonishment.

"Yes, dear; it has been very much in my way, and I want you to get the mastery of it earlier in life than I did. And it is what makes half our women so superficial."

Marjorie did not clearly understand what this word "superficial" meant; but she knew it had a good deal of connection with grammatical accuracy and mistakes in her sums and exercises.

"Well, father dear," she said resolutely, "I'll try not to be 'superficial' and 'desultory.' And so I'll just write out in prose, and do my exercises."

"Yes, only try to finish your poetical one another time, since you have begun it. Though you are rather young yet to try to translate Goethe. But I don't wonder that Mignon's song attracted you."

The exercises were finished and put away, and the bundle of flannel ostentatiously taken out, before Mr. Fleming at last pushed away his papers, with a wearier look than was often to be seen on his expressive face.

"There! I won't work any more to-night," he said. "I don't feel up to it. That cold damp air seems in my throat still—and those wretched places—I can't call them homes."

"But the angel?" asked Marjorie expectantly, settling herself on her favorite low chair, close to her father, with her work on her lap.

(To be continued.)

The animals to whom Nature has given the faculty we call cunning know always when to use it, and use it wisely; but when man descends to cunning he blunders and betrays.—Thomas Paine.