

## THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

## THE WIDOW'S LAST TRIAL.

BY MRS. N. SARGENT.

"He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

"AND to-morrow you are to be taken into the firm as a partner." This was uttered by an aged female, who was sitting with one of her withered hands clasped in that of her son, a young man of two and twenty, who sat looking in her face with eyes beaming with affectionate interest. "This fully repays me, my beloved son, for all I have suffered."

For a moment the son's features appeared clouded with sorrow; he thought what that suffering had been; of the years long past, when the mother now sitting beside him, so beloved, had submitted to toil and privation, enduring all this for his sake; his eyes glistened with tears, till brushing them away hastily, a smile broke over his countenance.

"True, mother," he said; "but let these recollections be forgotten now. The memory of the past we will bury in oblivion, and think only of the days that are to come."

"But you will not allow present prosperity to harden your heart, William; you will not let your good fortune make you high-minded and forget Him, who has been a friend in the hour of trouble?"

"No, mother, I will not forget that I am the child of God; yet should temptation assail me, I have only to think of your precepts and example, and they would always deter me from doing wrong. But think, mother," he continued, "a bright gleam lighting up every feature, 'how happy I shall be, in being enabled to place you in the sphere of life to which your virtues entitle you. If you knew how often busy fancy has pictured this hour; how often I have dwelt upon the idea of one day being able to place you in a home equal to your merit, you would not wonder that now, when I see my wishes on the eve of accomplishment, it should thus sub-ue me.'"

"Nor do I, nor do I, my son," the mother said with tearful eyes, "but you think more favourably, my boy, of your aged mother than she deserves. I doubt not many will think and say the old woman has now more than she merits; and really, though I am proud of your advancement, I should not murmur at never having a more comfortable home than the one you have provided me."

The night was pitchy dark, not a star being visible, while the wind, blowing in fitful gusts, portended a storm of unusual violence.

"'Twill be a stormy night, I fear," said the young man, rising and going towards the door to look out. "The river is already swollen, and if the rain falls as it did the other evening, I fear much damage will ensue. You heard of the poor fellow drowned last evening?"

"Yes," the mother replied. "I hope he had friends to take care of him. 'Tis a dreadful death to die," she added, musingly.

"They say not," said William; "many who have encountered it assert the being brought to, is the most painful part to endure."

"It may be so," the mother answered; "but I fervently trust no one dear to me may ever be submitted to the experiment."

A vivid flash of lightning, followed by the low rumbling thunder, caused William now to retire—and observing again that the river would be very high, he closed the door.

It was now the usual hour for family worship. The mother had seated herself in a corner of the fire-place, with her features settled into a look of devotion, while the son, with a corresponding gravity, walked towards the stand on which the family Bible was placed, and opening the sacred volume, began reading a chapter. Religion with them was not the cold expression of the lip alone. It was the incense of the heart. It was a beautiful sight, that aged mother, and her only son, bending their knees, and lifting up their voices to the Most High. Perhaps the events of the day had given a deeper tone of tenderness to William's voice and feelings; certain it was, he had never prayed more fervently than on that evening; and when they separated for the night, the poor old woman looked forward to the bright

vista of the future, with the full confidence of its meeting her most sanguine anticipations.

The mother of William had been left a widow, while he was in his second year. By dint of hard labour, she managed to get her boy at school, until he arrived at his fifteenth year, when she obtained a situation for him with a merchant, residing in the flourishing town of Rochester, in the State of New York. William's good conduct and steady application to business, won the favourable opinion of his employer. The merchant was a man of great benevolence; he could appreciate merit in whatever station it was to be met; and when he saw the lad supporting an aged mother out of his earnings—never mingling with the low and vicious, and practising a fidelity to business, unusual in one so young, it was impossible to avoid feeling an involuntary respect for his character.

William was aware of the merchant's kindness; he knew that his salary exceeded that given to other boys; still he never presumed on the merchant's disinterestedness, but was alike respectful to his employer and their customers. On the day in which he was introduced to the reader's notice, he had been offered a share in the merchant's lucrative business. Never had his brightest vision pictured such a result; but even then, when it would have been natural to suppose him greatly elated by his good fortune, he thought only of his mother; and while his expressions of gratitude were poured in eloquent language into the ear of his benefactor, there was a mingling of thanks that she would be the reaper of his unexampled kindness.

To-morrow! who may boast of to-morrow? The widow and her son parted from each other with happiness wrought in the perspective. The storm of the preceding evening had been succeeded by a morning of unusual mildness for the season, for it was the middle of January; and telling his mother he would not return to dinner, but that she would see him early in the evening, William bade her farewell.

It was at the close of the day, that a traveller went forth to view the picturesque and beautiful falls of the Genessee. He proceeded slowly, gazing upon the surrounding country, with the eye of a connoisseur, and had gained the point at which the fall could be seen to the greatest advantage, when his attention became engrossed by an object of exceeding interest. Near was a young man employed in endeavouring to collect some drift wood. He had stretched forth his arm to seize a floating log, when, the place being slippery, he lost his balance, and fell into the water. At first, the stranger thought him justly punished for his temerity, and felt inclined to smile at what he deemed his fool-hardiness; but soon other feelings predominated. The river was very high, and the current, running strong, soon brought the rash youth towards the rapids.

Who, oh! who may paint the anguished feelings of that helpless being knowing himself to be doomed to inevitable destruction! On, on the rapids dove him. There was not a ray of hope to cheer his drooping heart; but as the moment of impending fate drew near, desperation gave him strength to grapple with a death grasp; on the very top of the falls he stood upright on his feet, and giving one wild, dreadful shriek, went over. Faint and dizzy, the traveller had closed his eyes to shut out the dreadful sight. He knew that the despairing being had seen him, that the last agonizing appeal the unfortunate youth had made for aid was to him, and sick at heart he returned to the hotel.

When the melancholy fact became spread through the town, it was said to be a poor youth who had been in the habit of nightly carrying home a supply of drift-wood to his mother. All spoke highly of him, of his devotion to her, and of his subsequent good conduct. It was mentioned that his prospects had improved, and many conjectured that the force of habit, more than actual necessity, had occasioned the fatal catastrophe. Reader, the poor youth drowned was the widow's only son!

Not many days after, a coffin was seen emerging from the widow's now desolate mansion. The body of the young man had been found many miles below the spot at which he perished. Not a trace of his once pleasant countenance was perceptible; but his clothes were identified by many. There was one that would have recognized him under any circumstances—the heart-broken mother. When all shrunk and turned

away with horror from viewing the sight of his mutilated limbs, she clung to them, and wept over the body in the most bitter agony. The earth closed over his loved remains. It was the widow's LAST TRIAL.

Soon she was sleeping by his side.—Miss Leslie's Magazine.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

## TO A MOTHER.

YOUTHFUL mother, as you bend over the cradle of your firstborn infant, do you realize the treasure committed to your care? Do you realize that in that tiny form lives a spark of that Eternal Essence—a breath of life breathed into it by God himself, and do you remember that it can never die—never. Do what your child may—become what he may, he can never cease to be—forward, onward is his destiny. And do you know that it rests, I had almost said wholly, but, by the blessing of God, it does rest principally with you whether that cherished darling, that fair sweet babe, shall, a million of years hence, be a seraph, radiant and pure, bowing with the thousand times ten thousand before the throne of God, or a fiend, a demon? Do you shudder? Ah, well you might at this awful responsibility, were there no arm to sustain you, no heavenly Father to strengthen, no Holy Spirit to guide you. But I entreat you look thoughtfully, soberly at the reality, at the future as it is. Raise your eyes from the cares, and toils, and burdens of the household, and glance over that illimitable space which opens before you. Does not your soul rouse itself and feel some aspiration after the holy and the good—some desire for a higher life than this? Come, then, with the beautiful, the beloved ones, in your arms, and offer both yourself and the babe which God hath given you, to him. He will graciously receive you, and evermore bless and shield you. He will give both strength in the hour of temptation, consolation in the hour of trial, peace in the hour of danger, joy in the hour of death, and bliss, eternal, unspeakable, inconceivable, bliss, through the whole of that long forever which you see stretching out before you.—*Youth's Companion.*

## CAUTION TO YOUNG LADIES.

OH! it is a fearful sight to see a young confiding girl approach the altar with one who loves to linger around the wine-cup. He may pass unscathed through the fiery ordeal, and the bright hopes of the bride may ripen into fruition. But, fair reader, let not the splendour of wealth, nor the allurements of pleasure, nor the promised triumphs of ambition, tempt you to a risk so fraught with danger to all you hold dear. Honest industry, joined with temperance, may carve a fortune, and all that ambition should covet; but wealth, talents, fame, can never gild the drunkard's home, nor soothe the sorrows of a drunkard's wife.

## FIRE.

ACCORDING to Pliny, fire for a long time was unknown to some of the ancient Egyptians; and when Euxodus, the celebrated astronomer, showed it to them, they were absolutely in raptures.

The Persians, Phœnicians, Greeks, and several other nations, acknowledged their ancestors were once without the use of fire; the Chinese confessed the same of their progenitors. Pomponius Nela, Plutarch, and other ancient authors, speak of nations, who, at the time they wrote, knew not the use of fire, or had but just learnt it. Facts of the same kind are also attested by several modern nations.

The inhabitants of the Marian Islands, which were discovered in 1551, had no idea of fire.—Never was astonishment greater than theirs, when they saw it on the descent of Maghellan in one of their islands. At first they believed it to be some kind of animal that fixed itself to and fed upon wood. The inhabitants of the Philippine and Canary islands were formerly equally ignorant. Africa presents even in our days some nations in this deplorable state.—*Park's Chemical Essays.*

## PRAYER.

THE longer you are with God on the mount of private prayer, and secret communion with him, the brighter will your face shine when you come down.