



The Family Circle.

MY LITTLE HERO.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

Earth's bravest and truest heroes
Fight with an unseen foe,
And win a victory grander
Than you or I can know.
We little dream of the conflict
Fought in each human soul,
And earth knows not of her heroes
Upon God's Honor Roll.

But one of earth's little heroes
Right proud am I to know,
His name for me is mother;
My name for him is Joe.
At the thought of a ten-year-old hero
My friends have often smiled,
But a battle-field's a battle-field
In the heart of man or child.

There were plans of mischief brewing;
I saw, but gave no sign,
For I wanted to test the mettle
In this little knight of mine.
"Of course you must come and help us,
For we all depend on Joe,"
The boys said; and I waited
For his answer, yes, or no.

He stood and thought for a moment;
I read his heart like a book,
For the battle that he was fighting
Was told in his earnest look.
And then to his merry playmates
Out spoke my loyal knight,
"No, boys, I cannot go with you,
For I know it wouldn't be right."

I was proud of my little hero,
And I prayed by his peaceful bed,
As I gave him his bedtime kisses
And the good-night words were said,
That true to God and his manhood
He might stand in the world's fierce fight,
And shun each unworthy action
Because "it wouldn't be right."

—S.S. Times.

GRANDMOTHER'S ROOM.

BY MINNIE E. LOMBARD.

Herbert Lyster was what his neighbors called a "hard-fisted" man; and he had earned the name by dint of persevering stinginess from boyhood up. He and his good wife, Rhoda, had accumulated a snug little property, besides the many-acred farm which was to be his when "grandmother" should relinquish her claim to all earthly possessions. So he was really able to live in comfort; but, instead of that, the old red farmhouse, which was his father's before him, was a model of angularity, unadorned and unattractive, both inside and out, only preserving a decent aspect through Rhoda's thrift and neatness.

Six little ones made music in the old house, save when their father was there. His presence seemed to send a chill through their warm little hearts, for he made them think that they were "bills of expense," and whenever they asked for pretty things he told them that they "cost money," and sent them away with a reproof for their desires.

And yet Herbert Lyster claimed that he was just. "Don't I pay the minister two dollars every single year?" he would say when the puzzled collectors came to him for money. Of course he did; and if the reverend gentlemen was a smart preacher he added a peck of beans to his annual subscription, although this came a little hard on him when the harvest was poor. Not being a church member, he did not feel called to give to the "heathen," as he was wont to style all benevolent objects of what-over character; and it was generally understood that the two dollars were given on grandmother's account.

Dear Grandmother Lyster! known and loved by everybody in Milton. She was peace-maker, adviser, and, in fact, condensed sunshine in Herbert's home from January to December. She was a good Christian, too, and Herbert was glad of that, for he believed that the Bible was good in case of sickness or death; and he believed, too, that when he was as old as she he would go to heaven after he had grown tired of this world's goods. But dear Grandmother Lyster knew better than this; and morning, noon and night her prayers ascended for him, her only remaining child, and his family.

But the love of gain had so eaten into Herbert's best affections that it seemed as if he had forgotten all claims upon him. And Grandmother Lyster found it very trying to

ask a favor of him, and denied herself many a necessity before doing it.

Something more than usually important troubled her mind, however, on one bright fall morning as she sat by the kitchen fire. Her knitting needles lay idly in her lap; and she did not even notice that little May had pulled two of the needles out, or that mischievous Willie was climbing upon the back of her chair. Whatever the problem was, it troubled her all the forenoon; but after dinner she followed her son to the door and said: "I've been thinking, Herbert, could I not have a little room somewhere all to myself? I am getting old now, well on to seventy-eight, and the children are pretty noisy sometimes, and I thought maybe, if it would not be too much trouble—"

"Hem! Well, really, grandm'am, the children are pretty noisy sometimes, that's a fact; but I declare!—well, I'll see," and he went off to the field.

As a result of the "seeing," on the next rainy day the noise of hammering was heard in a chamber over the kitchen, which had never been used only to store old rubbish away in, and which was gloomy and out of the way at the best. Dear Grandmother Lyster, dear old soul, looked sober at the prospect of things, and Rhoda wanted to interfere, but did not dare for fear of Herbert's displeasure. At the end of two days the room was ready for use. Grandmother Lyster dragged up the steep flight of stairs, with two little tots after her, bringing bible, hymn-book, Wesley's Sermons and knitting-work. The room was low, slanting on one side, unpapered, uncarpeted and only lighted by two small windows, which did their best to admit pure daylight, notwithstanding the dark calico curtains fixed so trimly before them. A bed stood in one corner, before which was a rug of her own manufacture, and a stove with two legs in the centre of the room.

Grandmother looked out of the window, but the view was not pleasant: Two barns, the watering trough and a fashionable summer resort of ducks and geese, that was all. She was not one to complain, but she sadly missed the grand sweep of the mountain and valley which had greeted her eyes from the door ever since she was brought there a happy bride.

Then, arranging her books on the table, she sang, in her quaint way—

"Thus far the Lord has led me on,"

and before the verse was finished her heart was at peace again.

"Doin' to stay up here all 'lone, g'anma?" said wee May, in pitying accents.

"Oh, no! I guess you and Willie will come up real often, won't you?"

"I dess so; but 'tain't very pitty," said the little one as she trotted down stairs again.

Meantime, Herbert, as he followed the plow, was thinking of the five dollars expended in repairing the room, and trying to persuade himself that he was, indeed, a worthy son. "Five dollars! It ain't every one that would do as much for his mother as I do for mine," he thought. "Too old to go upstairs! Oh! well, when she once gets up she is more out of the way, and she wants quiet, you know." He had to do something to quiet his conscience, and took that way of doing it.

He retired that night thinking, "Five dollars for grandm'am's room, and the mare lame in both feet!" But while these dismal thoughts filled his mind his body seemed to be in the kitchen below. He was not alone, however, for a woman was there before him walking the floor with a child in her arms. Back and forth she paced, carefully holding the pale-faced boy in the same position while he slept.

"Edith," said a voice from an adjoining room, "that little one will wear you all out. Can't I take him a little while?"

"Oh! no," was the reply. "He likes to have me carry him so, poor little fellow!"

"Ah!" said Herbert to himself, "that's the way mother carried me six nights when I got scalded so terribly."

The scene changed, and he saw himself again—a crushed foot this time, demanding his mother's untiring care. Again and again incidents of his life were re-enacted before him, but always with his mother there, comforting, working or praying. Whether sick in body or in mind, he saw how all through his life a mother's tender love had surrounded him; and then stood once more beside his father's death-bed, and heard again the solemn charge: "Be kind to your mother, Herbert, and make her old age happy. She is all you have left now."

With these words ringing in his ears, Herbert Lyster awoke to find the perspiration standing on his forehead and a strange, weird sensation resting on him like a spell, which he tried in vain to throw off. He tried to compose his mind and again to sleep. He trembled from head to foot as though something frightful had troubled his slumbers. In fact, conscience, so long soothed and quieted, had freed herself, and determined to make one more effort for his soul. She lashed him unmercifully. She showed him how his soul was growing smaller and meaner every day; how

he was just a nuisance on God's fair earth. He saw himself in a mirror that reflected the inmost recesses of his heart, and was horrified at the sight of wickedness so long concealed.

As the hours wore slowly on toward the day Herbert grew to hate himself more and more, until, almost stifled in doors, he arose and went out. Mysterious and still the mist lay along the foot of the mountain, and the star that twinkled in the sky seemed far, far away.

Habit led Herbert into the barnyard where the cattle were; but they only stared at him sleepily as they lay tranquilly chewing the cud. So he wandered out and down the path that led into the maple-grove which had been a playground for three generations! As he passed slowly under the trees his boyhood came back to him so fresh that the two-score years of hard, grinding toil flew away as if by magic, and it seemed that he was a happy, careless boy again, and that his mother was leading him by the hand. How had its golden promises been fulfilled. A blush of shame rose to the man's cheek as he thought of how hard and cold his heart had grown. Hundreds of times he had stood by the side of that same stream, without noticing any traces of beauty. But as the sun arose over the distant mountain tops it seemed as though he had never looked upon the scene before. So new, so beautiful! And a wonderful sense of God's nearness stole over him, such as he never felt before, and at the same time a new love for his mother, who had so long been the only Bible he read, filled his heart like a fresh revelation from the Father. The lowing of the cattle brought him to himself, and he turned homeward, passed up the lane into the barn, and was soon throwing hay into the mangers below. Suddenly he stopped and said, "My mother shall have a better room than that if it costs five hundred dollars! Now, that's so!" Hurrah! good once more had triumphed over evil, as the experience of the morning culminated in this worthy resolution.

Soon the patter of little feet was heard, and May cried, "Pa, pa, mother wants to know where you be, 'caus she's been worryin' about you, fear you's sick, and breakses is all getting cold this minute. Fried eggs, too, ain't it, Edith?"

"I'll be in directly," came the answer from the high mow. So happy, chattering May and quiet Edith climbed down the high steps and started toward the house. Their father overtook them as they stopped to look at the little chickens just hatched the day before, and catching May up he put her on his shoulder, then drew down the little face and kissed the fresh, sweet lips. "How natural!" one may say. No, not natural for Herbert Lyster, whose children feared more than loved him.

May was astonished and half frightened, and as she began to wriggle he put her gently down.

Running up to Edith, she whispered, "Pa just kissed me all his own self, Edith."

"Did he?" said Edith, opening wide her eyes with astonishment. Then she hurried on and walked close to her father's side, while her little heart fluttered with the hope that he might give her a kiss too. But she was not noticed; and very much grieved she shrank away, wondering if he loved May best.

"I dreamed of your father last night, Herbert," said his mother at breakfast, "and you can't think how natural he looked."

Herbert didn't say anything, but could not help thinking that his father performed a double duty that night. During the forenoon he had a long conference with his wife, which seemed to be satisfactory, for as he left her he said, "Well, then, you take the things out this afternoon, and White shall come over and do the painting to-morrow."

Before night the cheerful spare-room which adjoined the parlor was empty, and the old-fashioned paper, with its over-recurring pictures of Rebecca at the well, a shepherdess and a hunter, was stripped from the wall. Silence was imposed upon all the children, "for grandm'am mustn't know," and the little things went around the house fairly aching with the importance of their secret, and holding on to themselves for fear they might tell. Mysterious trips were taken in the old market wagon, and a suspicious smell of new things filled the air; but when grandm'am enquired what was going on downstairs, Edith clapped both hands over her mouth, and May screamed, "Oh! nuffin, grandma, on'y—Oh! Edith, come down quick!"

One bright October afternoon, however, the work was finished, and Herbert, jealous of the privilege, went upstairs and said: "Mother, can you come downstairs a few minutes now?" trying to look unconcerned.

"Why, la me!" smoothing down the front of her dress and putting on her fresh cap, "has the minister come? I ain't fixed up one bit."

"No, no, mother; there is no occasion for fixin' up. It ain't much of anything, only me—that is—well, perhaps you'd better come now."

"Herbert," said the old lady solemnly,

laying her hand on his arm, "if it's bad news just tell me right away. The Lord will give me strength to bear it, just as He has the dispensations all along."

Poor Herbert! how to acquaint his mother with this dispensation he didn't know, but little May came to the rescue.

"Oh, g'anma," said she, seizing one of the wrinkled hands, "we can't wait another minute; it's all splendid; and Willie, and Edith, and baby, and I have all got our clean aprons on, and Wesley, he's in, so come straight down," and, timing her impatient hops to the tottering footsteps she guided, May soon had grandmother in the midst of a smiling group, while the relieved father brought up the rear.

"Now, g'anma," said Edith, seizing the free hand, "shut up your eyes tight till I say open them," and then the delighted children, followed by the rest of the family, drew her into the old spare-room. "Now, now, g'anma, open, open! and what do you see?" they cried, dancing and clapping their hands. Grandmother looked around in perfect amazement. Truly a wondrous change had been wrought. Beautiful light paper covered the walls and a bright, soft carpet the floor, while pretty shades hung before the four great windows, whose tassels swung back and forth in the October breeze, like bells dumb with joy.

"Herbert, Herbert, what does this mean?" "It's your room, g'anma," shouted a chorus of voices.

"Why, this is good enough for a queen; you can't mean it all for a poor old creature like me," and the darling old lady's eyes began to run over with happy tears, while Herbert tried in vain to find voice to reply; and dear patient Rhoda sobbed outright.

"Why, g'anma," shouted little Willie at the top of his voice, "I shouldn't think you'd cry, 'caus this is the cutest room in the house; and when me and Wes comes in we must take off our boots and talk real soft. And, oh! just look at this table-cloth and this rug, it feels like velvet; and this stool—do you see? it's got a cat's foot on every one of its legs. That's to put your foot on, you know; and oh, say, can't we play puss in the corner sometimes if we don't make any noise?"

"G'anma, I can almost smell these roses," said Edith, patting the paper.

So with the help of the children the room was christened, everything examined and praised, and at last the noisy little troop withdrew. The grandmother sank down with a sense of great comfort into the great easy chair by the window.

"Do you like it, mother?" asked Herbert, as he sat down in a chair near her.

"Like it? It seems too good to be real. I've thought sometimes in my mansion—heavenly, you know—I should find everything soft and nice and cosy like. But to have a room like this on earth—why, it never entered my brain. I can't tell you how thankful I am; but God will reward you for it, for I believe that nothing but the Spirit of God could have told you to do it. Don't you think I will see you a Christian before I die?" and her voice trembled and tears choked her utterance.

"I don't know, mother;" then came a long pause, for the farmer, almost as silent as the fields he tilled could find no words to express his feelings.

"Mother, the day that I put you into that old room over the kitchen my conscience troubled me so that I could not sleep, and when I did sleep visions of you carrying me and tending me and of father on his deathbed arose before me, and the solemn warning he gave me to 'be kind to your mother, Herbert, and make her old age happy,' came to me so distinct that I awoke in a great perspiration and could sleep no more. So I got up and went out, and as I stood by the little stream a sense of God's goodness came to me in overwhelming mercy, and I decided that you should have a nice room if it cost me five hundred dollars," and Herbert drew his hand across his eyes to check the unbidden tears.

Grandmother did not care if the tears did come in her eyes, for they were joyful ones.

"And by the grace of God I am going to try and serve Him, and try and make up for my past life."

She kissed him and he left the room, while Grandmother Lyster knelt down on the bright new carpet and thanked God for giving her the joy of seeing her son brought to Christ, and for the rest of the family, and arose from her knees much strengthened and a great peace in her soul.

Pretty soon Rhoda came stealing in with a look of apprehension resting on her face.

"Mother," said she sinking into a chair, "I am afraid Herbert's going to die."

"Don't worry, Rhoda, Herbert's getting ready to live. I tell you what, daughter, he has just told me that he has experienced religion."

A flash of joy lighted up Rhoda's worn countenance as she spoke.

"Do you think so, mother? Oh, if it only could be true!"