

STORIES
POETRY.

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

WHAT PRAYER CAN DO.

"No," said the lawyer, "I shan't press your claim against that man. You can get someone else to take the case, or you can withdraw it, just as you please."

"Think there isn't any money in it?"
"There would probably be a little money in it; but it would come from the sale of the little house the man occupies and calls 'his home.' But I don't want to meddle with the matter anyhow."

"Got frightened out of it, eh?"

"Not at all."

"I suppose the old fellow begged hard to be let off?"

"Well, yes he did."

"And you caved in, likely."

"Yes."

"What in creation did you do?"

"I believe I shed a few tears."

"The old fellow begged you hard, you say?"

"No, I didn't say so; he didn't speak a word to me."

"Well, may I ask whom he addressed in your hearing?"

"God Almighty."

"He took to praying, did he?"

"Not for my benefit in the least. You see, I found the little house easily enough, and knocked on the outer door, which stood ajar, but nobody heard me; so I stepped into the little hall, and saw through the crack of the door a cosy sitting-room, and there on the bed, with her silver head high on the pillows, was an old lady who looked for all the world just as my mother did the last time I saw her on earth. I was on the point of knocking again, when she said, 'Come, father, now begin; I am all ready.' Down on his knees by her side went the old white-haired man, still older than his wife, I should judge; and I couldn't have knocked then for the life of me. Well, he began. First, he reminded God that they were still his submissive children, mother and he, and, no matter what he saw fit to bring upon them, they should not rebel against his will. Of course it was going to be hard for them to go out homeless in their old age, especially with poor mother so sick and helpless; and oh, how different it might have been if only one of the boys had been spared! Then his voice kind of broke, and a thin, white hand stole from under the coverlid, and moved softly through his snowy hair. Then he went on to repeat that nothing could ever be so sharp again as the parting with those three sons—unless mother and he should be separated! But at last he fell to comforting himself with the fact that the good Lord knew that it was through no fault of his own that mother and he were threatened with the loss of their dear little home, which meant beggary and the almshouse—a place they prayed to be delivered from, if it could be consistent with God's will. And then he quoted a multitude of promises concerning the safety of those who put their trust in the Lord. In fact, it was the most thrilling plea to which I ever listened. At last he prayed for God's blessing upon those about to demand justice."

Then the lawyer continued more slowly than ever, "And—I believe I had rather go to the poorhouse myself to-night than to stain my hands and heart with the blood of such persecutions as that."

"Little afraid to defeat the old man's prayer, eh?"

"Bless your soul, man, you couldn't defeat that prayer. I tell you, he left it all subject to the will of God; but he claimed that we were told to make

known our desires to Him. But, of all the pleading I ever heard, that moved me most. You see, I was taught that kind of thing myself in my childhood, and why I was sent to hear that prayer I am sure I don't know—but I hand the case over."

"I wish," said the client, uneasily, "I wish you hadn't told me about that old man's prayer."

"Why so?"

"Well, because I want the money the place would bring. I was taught the Bible straight enough when I was a youngster, and I hate to run counter to what you tell me about it; and another time I would not listen to petitions not intended for my ears."

The lawyer smiled.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you are wrong again. It was intended for my ears, and yours, too; and God Almighty intended it. My old mother used to sing about 'God move in a mysterious way,' I remember."

"Well, my mother used to sing it, too," said the client, and he twisted the claim papers in his fingers. "You can call in the morning, if you like, and tell 'mother and him' the claim has been met."

"In a mysterious way," added the lawyer.—Selected.

THE BABY TRAVELLER.

Dear little dimpled feet! What covering meet to hold
Within its gentle pressure an atom of such mould!

The velvet petals of the rose or lily should enfold

The dear little dimpled feet.

Dear little restless feet! They patter all the day,
Nor from their tireless journey ever ask to stay,

Though oft they trip and stumble, up, and again away!

Dear little restless feet!

Dear little loving feet! How quick they are to bring

The answering smile, the sweetest kiss; then, as on wing,

To his away exultant, some note of joy to fling,

Dear little loving feet!

Dear little happy feet! May sorrow never check

Their lightsome tread, nor thorns grow up where roses now bedeck

The path that love and tenderness from pitfalls guard, and wreck,

Dear little happy feet!

Dear little trusting feet! Who would their faith betray,

Or tempt their pure innocence out of the happy way?

Kind Father, ever guard and guide lest they should go astray,

Dear little trusting feet!

THE BOY'S COMPOSITION.

A schoolmaster said to his pupils, that to the boy who could make the best piece of composition in five minutes on "How to Overcome Habit" he would give a prize. When the five minutes had expired, a lad of nine years stood up, and said: "Well, sir, habit is hard to overcome. If you take off the first letter it does not change 'abit.' If you take off another letter you still have a 'bit' left. If you take off still another, the whole of 'it' remains. If you take off another, it is not totally used up, all of which goes to show you must throw it off altogether. Result—he won it."

ON GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH OUR FAMILIES.

It is not that we do not love our families, but that we do not know them. Love—even the most self-sacrificing—does not imply understanding. Many a mother who would die for her son is utterly blind to his most cherished aspirations. Many a father who could ruin himself for his daughter's happiness cannot converse with her an hour. Brothers and sisters, generous to a fault, live side by side with no mutual interests.

Of course, we know well enough all the faults and foibles of our families. There is no trouble on that score. We may take a clanish pride in concealing them from strangers, but we discuss them freely among ourselves, openly charge the offenders with them. This knowledge, far from helping us to a better understanding, is a positive hindrance. We have a curious way of magnifying the faults till they entirely over shadow the virtues. With this exaggerated sense of our relatives' faults we take no pains to search out the more delicate and subtle traits of character. In fact, it does not occur to us that they are worth knowing; we are too busy getting acquainted with other people.

So day after day we sleep under the same roof, and sit at the same table, and touch each other's lives only on the surface. The fault is, of course, a two sided one; we not only fail to understand the others, but we do not let them understand us. We neither seek in them nor offer to them the best things of life. Our most intimate relations are usually with outsiders.

Thus it often happens that we first learn from strangers how to appreciate our very own. Have you not sometimes marveled to see some members of your family "blossom out" in the presence of a stranger? Have you ever surprised any of your family somewhere outside the home, and been surprised yourself, to see him as others see him? Parents hear with amazement—if not incredulity—the teacher's account of the children's ability in this or that direction. The boy first learns from his father's old college chum that the "old man" is a wit; the girl from her grandmother and aunts that her mother was a belle. By and by, when boy or girl comes to marry, it can be from the new "in law" that the family learn of hidden traits and tastes which in long years of intercourse they have never suspected.

We are wont to complain that we have no time or opportunity to get acquainted with our families. The thousand and one calls of our rushing modern life exhausts our vitality. But it is vain to rail against mere externals when the real difficulty is with ourselves. The utmost simplicity of life does not necessarily bring mutual family understanding, nor does a complex life destroy it. If we really want to know our people better, we shall find a way.

Sometimes the revelation comes in a great crisis; sickness, financial stress, peril, bereavement. At such times our shyness drops off, we lose our self-consciousness. In the presence of the great realities we show the best which is in us. We are drawn together in an intimacy which sweetens the bitterest calamity. And then we learn what we have been missing all along, how much we might have had for the mere asking—and giving.

One of the most pathetic little stories I ever heard was of a sister who came to know her brother only on his death-bed. They had loved each other dearly, but his shyer and more sensitive nature