

OUR HOME CIRCLE.

THE OLD YEARS' BLESSING.

The path leads to the field the broad. Now here, The dew is on the grass, and the sun is in the sky. I will not let thee go except thou bless me. O swift departing year!

A RIDE WITH THE DEACON.

BY UNCLE BOSTON.

Not with Josiah Tatt, for a Sunday-school missionary could not "ride in the same cart" with the Farmersville croaker without "falling out."

My Deacon's name we will call Smith (so as to keep this fuss in the family); he had also been elected superintendent of the Sunday-school; he could talk well and pray well. The deacon met me at the station with his "one horse shay"; we were to have a long ride over the prairie together; the only cars beside our own hearing the conversation were those belonging to "old Neddy," the horse, who continually turned his "auricular appendages" toward us, seemingly very much interested in what we were saying. I ventured the opening remark of our talk:

"So the elder has resigned." "Yes," said the deacon, "we couldn't raise enough money for him." "What's the trouble?" "We're all poor on this prairie."

Just then we came to a farmer leaning over a fence. His question to the deacon was: "What's wheat worth at the station to-day?" "Dollar and a quarter for number two," answered the deacon.

After a few questions concerning their stock, corn, oats, etc., the easy-going horse was exhorted to "Get up." Resuming our conversation, I asked: "Have you a pretty good wheat crop this year, deacon?" "Yes, a very fair crop, about twenty-five bushels to the acre."

tell me what you wanted those figures for?" I said, "Just wait a minute, deacon, and tell me who gave the sunshine and rain and such favorable weather for the wheat crop?"

"Why, the Giver of all good things, of course," replied the deacon. "Well, deacon, do you know what the promise is that secure-well-filled barns?" He could not "call it to mind just then."

Opening my Bible at the third chapter of Proverbs and ninth verse, I read as emphatically as I could, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled; and quietly asked, "Deacon, do you know the Lord has many children who read that last-fruits?"

No answer was given. After a little meditation the old gentleman asked, "Well, how much ought a Christian to give, anyway?" I said to the good man, "Suppose when I reach your house I take ten oranges from my satchel and say to your youngest daughter, 'Here Elna, are ten oranges. I want you to give me one back. Now what would you say if Elna refused to give me one orange?'"

"Why, I'd whip her if she didn't come straight to you and give you the largest one of all." "Well, now, deacon, do you think our Father has any children who need to be whipped for not giving him at least one-tenth, of all he gives them in this world?"

"It does seem as if every child of God ought to be willing to give at least a tenth, but they won't do it," and the good man said the closing words with truthful emphasis.

"Now, deacon, I'll tell you why I put down those figures you so willingly gave concerning the wheat crop of your so-called poverty-stricken church; and took my memorandum book from my pocket. 'I have asked nothing about the crops of corn, oats, potatoes, nor of the stock raised by these ten members of your church. Let the profits of them pay all the expenses of raising the wheat crop, though you see that the step is robbing the Lord of the first-fruits. Nothing has been said about the incomes of the other thirty members of your church. The number of acres of wheat planted by these ten members is eight hundred. You say the average number of bushels to the acre is at least twenty-five; that makes twenty thousand bushels, and the price of wheat at the station, to which this wheat will be hauled in the next two weeks, is one dollar and twenty-five cents, with a prospect of going higher. Now, that makes the amount of money which will come into the possession of these ten members, the nice little sum of twenty-five thousand dollars; and if they paid the Lord his tenth your treasury would have in it twenty-five hundred dollars with which to pay a number-one pastor and make liberal contributions to all our benevolent societies."

"Old Neddy turned into the roadway leading up to the well-managed farm of the deacon, who remarked as he took my satchel out of the "shay": "Figures are awfully stubborn things, and your mathematical calculation shows very plainly that we are not so very poor as we like to make ourselves sometimes. But let us go and see if wife has that big pitcher of milk ready for the Sunday-school missionary.—The Standard."

I again carefully inquired, "Are most of the members of your church farmers?" and quietly took my memorandum-book and pencil from my pocket. "Yes, they are mostly farmers; there is Bro. C, who keeps the village store, and Bro. A, who owns the mill, and several others who are not farmers."

I jotted down the deacon's sixty acres of wheat, with twenty-five bushels to the acre, and soon figured the amount of money the old gentleman would receive for his wheat alone, and found it amounted to \$1,875. I then asked the deacon if he knew about how many acres of wheat his neighbors had, and learned that Bro. D. had eighty, Bro. E. seventy-five, Bro. F. one hundred, Bro. G. sixty, Bro. H. ninety, Bro. I. one hundred and twenty, Bro. J. seventy-five, Bro. K. eighty, Bro. L. sixty.

"Is that high or low estimate?" I asked, shutting up my book and placing it in my pocket. "Well, I think I am safe in saying it is about right, but," added the deacon, "tell me what you put down those figures for in that little book you've just hid away in your pocket?" "O," I replied, "I am just getting a few notes for my sermon to-morrow."

"That answer isn't one bit satisfactory. Now I want you to tell me what you wanted those figures for?" I said, "Just wait a minute, deacon, and tell me who gave the sunshine and rain and such favorable weather for the wheat crop?"

short year we lived together, and then she died. More than ever in those last sufferings did I see the reality and value of her faith, and when I found myself alone—surrounded with grief and without one person on earth to cling to—I found myself also, without even thinking of my own, instinctively crying out in my agony to her God for help and comfort.

"I am," I felt the answer. Before I had time to reason whether I believed or not my heart had cried in its orphanage, and had heard the answering heart of God. And that touch of love and comfort was so sweet and real that I just kept on praying, and the same answer has ever come, and I know it is God; so that now you see I have got faith, I hardly know how. But I know it is faith, and I know it is true, and that is enough for me."

Yes, he had sought for God where alone God ever can meet man, "in spirit and truth," in the simplicity of the heart, in the attitude not of the proud censor, but the helpless child and the penitent sinner.

When will men cease to strain their weary eyes toward a cold and lofty region where the Father is not found, and simply turn to the cradle of Bethlehem, the Cross of Calvary, the footstool of simple, lovely penitence, to find Him, who has Himself said, "I dwell with him that is humble, and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at My word."

CLOUDLESS HOURS ONLY.

There stands in the garden of old St. Muck A sun dish, quaint and gray, And it takes no heed of the hours that dark Pass it over day by day. It has stood for ages among the flowers, In the land of sky and song, 'Till the sun and the cloudless hours, 'Till it motto the whole day long.

So let my heart in this garden of life Its content cheerfully keep, Taking no note of the sorrow and strife, Which in shadow across it creep. Content to dwell in this land of ours, In the hope that is twin with love, And remember none but the cloudless hours Till the day-star dawn from above. W. C. Doane.

DANCING.

A great number of well meaning young Christians have been lulled from the path of duty, through the influence of dancing. Having had some experience with this "innocent amusement," as it was presented to me, with the interrogation, "what harm can there be in dancing?" I could not explain it with my experience at the time, although I had promised the pastor upon my examination for admission into the church that I would renounce dancing. Because I could not answer the question above mentioned, and because persons to whom I looked for an example, who belonged to the church indulged in the practice; I consented to join in this "amusement."

I tried it just long enough to become convinced that I could not live a Christian and dance. The following are the reasons why. It separated me from intimate communion with Christ—secret prayer and reading the Bible became irksome duties, instead of real heart-felt enjoyment, and were finally given up.

It grieved the most devoted members of the church, those who had taken the deepest interest in my salvation. It weakened my influence for good amongst the unconverted. It brought reproach upon Christianity. It brought me amongst evil associates and caused some of my companions to stumble and fall. It caused me to be half-hearted in all religious services.

I am satisfied that a dancing professor of religion cannot be a happy and useful Christian. We must be dead to the world and its amusements, and alive unto God, if we would enjoy His favor. We must take pleasure in the regular means of grace, if we would grow as Christians.

Again, I observed that to attend dances I must dress in an unhealthful manner, and expose myself to great fatigue, which induced disease. It caused me to partake of late suppers, undermining my health. It produced loose habits of thought and unhealthful reflections. By the laws of the dance I was brought into close relation with persons that I could in no wise respect.

For these reasons I renounced the practice forever, and I hope that every young Christian who reads this article and is troubled on this subject will do the same. Some persons say there is no harm in a private dance at home, in the parlor. But experience says that both alike destroy spirituality; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

THE GIRL EVERYBODY LIKES.

She is not beautiful—oh, no! Nobody thinks of calling her that. No one out of a dozen can tell whether her eyes are blue or hazel. If you should ask them to describe her, they would only say, "She is just plain," and there it would be. She is a merry-hearted, fun-loving, bewitching maiden, without a spark of envy or malice in her whole composition. She enjoys herself, and wants everybody else to do the same. She has always a kind word and a pleasant smile for the oldest man or woman; in fact, I can think of nothing she re-embles more than a sunbeam, which brightens everything it comes in contact with. All pay her marked attention, from rich Mr. Watts, who lives in a mansion on the hill, to negro Sam, the sweep. All look after her with an admiring eye, and say to themselves: "She is just the right sort of a girl." The young men of the town vie with one another as to who shall show her the most attention; but she never encourages them beyond being simple kind and jolly; so [no one can call her a flirt; no, indeed, for the young men all deny such an assertion as quickly as she. Girls—wonderful to relate—like her, too; for she never delights in hurting their feelings, or saying spiteful things behind their backs. She is always willing to join in their little plans, and to assist them in any way. They go to her with their love affairs, and she manages adroitly to see Willie or Peter, and drop a good word for Ila or Jennie, until their little difficulties are all patched up, and everything goes on smoothly again—Mr. thanks to her. Old ladies say she is "delightful." The sly witch—she knows how to manage them. She listens patiently to complaints of rheumatism or "neuralgia," and then sympathizes with them so heartily that they are more than half cured. But she cannot be always with us. A young man comes from a neighboring town, after a time, and marries her. The villagers crowd around to tell him what a prize he has won, but he seems to know it pretty well without any telling, to judge from his face. So she leaves us, and it is not long before we hear from that place. She is there the woman everybody likes.

is quoted here and there with a respect which shows in what esteem it was already held. At the time Arthur Hallam died he was engaged to be married to a sister of the poet's. She was scarcely seventeen at the time. One of the sonnets, addressed by Arthur Hallam to his betrothed, was written when he began to teach her Italian.

Lady, I bid thee to a summer home, Taming with school of Italian song; Heed not to these these marble halls belong, And all the pleasant places live a home. Hark, as the night, with fall piano tone, Old Dante's voice once chide all the art; Hark yet again, like flute-tones mingling rare, Comes the keen sweetness of Petrarch's moan. Press thou the lute's reed; without fear Feast on the music. I do better know thee Than to suspect this pleasure thou dost owe me. Will wrong thy gentle spirit, or make less dear That element whence thou must draw thy life— An English maiden and an English wife."

As we read the pages of this little book we come upon more than one happy moment saved out of the past, hours of delight and peaceful friend-ship, saddened by no foreboding, and complete in themselves.

"Alfred, I would that you beheld me now, Sitting beneath an ivied, mossy wall. Above my head Dilates immeasurable a wild of leaves, Seeming received into the blue expanse That vaults the summer noon." There is something touching in the tranquil ring of the voice calling out in the summer noontide with all a young man's expansion. It seemed to be but the beginning of a beautiful happy life, when suddenly the end came. Arthur Hallam was travelling with his father in Austria when he died very suddenly, with scarce a warning sign of illness. Mr. Hallam had come home and found his son as he supposed, sleeping upon a couch; but it was death, not sleep. "Those whose eyes must long be dim with tears—" writes the heart-stricken father—"brought him home to rest among his kindred and in his own country." They chose his resting-place in a tranquil spot on a lone hill that overhangs the British Channel. He was buried in the chancel of Clevedon Church, in Somerset, by Clevedon Court, which had been his mother's early home.—Mrs. Ritchie in Harper's Magazine.

A MAN OF HONOR.

A clerk in the Treasury Department at Washington often knows an official secret which is of such pecuniary value that he could make himself a rich man by telling it. It is said that when the Ways and Means Committee decided to increase the tax on whiskey, a small circle of men made their fortunes by becoming possessed of the official secret. The Manhattan tells the following anecdote of an honorable clerk:

In the dark days of '64, a Treasury clerk kept for twenty-four hours a secret known only to President Lincoln and Secretary Chase besides himself. When it became officially known, it sent gold flying up, and the country was in dismay. It was a secret, too, that could have been passed on without harming the Union cause. It was simply a question of keeping faith till the time came. An hour after the news broke the clerk fairly staggered under a terrific slap on his shoulder. He heard and saw a banker whom he knew well. "You miserable fool!" cried the banker. "I'd have given you one hundred thousand dollars to have known this twenty-four hours ago!"

And the banker could have well afforded to do it. But the clerk had the satisfaction of knowing that he had done his duty, as many another Government officer has done under circumstances of temptation.

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS

Christ wants you now. Do not wait to become older. It is easier to give your hearts to Jesus and commence to live for him now than it will be when you are older. Every day of delay may take you farther from the Saviour. Those who "seek early" have special promises of success in finding Christ. Christ wants you now—every one of you who read this. Ask him to forgive your sins however small they may be, for every little sin needs forgiveness, and he alone can give this. Give yourself to Jesus now, and when you have done this, help your companions to do the same.

THE CROOKED TREE.

"Such a cross old woman as Mrs. Barnes is! I never would send her play or anything of the kind," said Mr. Daws, sitting on the porch. "Such a cross old woman as Mrs. Barnes is!" said Mr. Daws, sitting on the porch. "Such a cross old woman as Mrs. Barnes is!" said Mr. Daws, sitting on the porch.

"Molly! Molly! come quick and see Mr. Daws straighten the old cherry tree!" called Tom through the window; and old Mrs. Barnes was forgotten as Molly flew over the green to the next yard.

Her mother watched with a good deal of interest the efforts of two stout men as, with ropes, they strove to pull the crooked tree this way and that, but it was of no use.

"It's as crooked as the letter S and has been for 20 years. You're just twenty years too late, Mr. Daws," said Joe as he dropped the rope and wiped the sweat from his face.

"Are you sure you haven't begun 20 years too late on tobacco and rum, Joe?" asked Mr. Daws. "That's a true word, master, and it's as hard to break off with them as it is to make this old tree straight. But I signed the pledge last night, and with God's help I mean to keep it."

"With God's help you may hope to keep it, Joe," responded the master. "Our religion gives every man a chance to reform. No one need despair so long as we have such promises of grace to help."

"That's my comfort, sir," said the man, humbly, "but I shall tell the boys to try and not grow crooked at the beginning."

"Mother," said Molly as she stood by the window again at her mother's side, "I know now what is the matter with old Mrs. Barnes. She needn't try to be pleasant and kind now, for she's like the old tree; it's 20 years too late."

"It's never too late, with God's help, to try to do better, but my little girl must begin now to keep back harsh words and unkind thoughts; then she will never have to say, as Joe said about the tree, 'it is 20 years too late.'" — Child's World.

LUTHER'S SNOW SONG.

On a cold dark night, when the wind was blowing hard and the snow was falling fast, Conrad, a worthy citizen of a little town in Germany, sat playing his flute, while Ursula, his wife, was preparing supper, when he heard some one singing outside—

"Foxes to their holes have gone, Every bird unto his nest; But I wander here alone, And for me there is no rest."

Tears filled the good man's eyes as he said, "What a fine sweet voice! What a pity it should be spoiled by being tried in such weather!" "I think it is the voice of a child. Let us open the door and see," said his wife, who had lost a little boy not long before, and whose heart was open to take pity on the little wanderer. Conrad opened the door and saw a ragged child, who said: "Charity, good sir, for Christ's sake!" "Come in, my little one," said he. "You shall rest with me for the night." The boy said, "Thank God," and entered. The heat of the room made him faint, but Ursula's kind care soon revived him. They gave him some supper, and then he told that he was the son of a poor miner, and wanted to be a scholar. He wandered about and sang, and lived on the money people gave him. His kind friends would not let him talk much, but sent him to bed. When he was asleep they looked in upon him, and were so pleased with his pleasant countenance that they determined to keep him, if he was willing. In the morning they found that he was only too glad to remain with them. They sent him to school, and afterward he went into a monastery. There, one day, he found a Bible, which he read, and learned the way of life. The sweet voice of the little singer became the strong echo of the good news—"Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Conrad and Ursula, when they took the little street singer into their house, little thought that they were nourishing the great champion of the reformation. The poor child was Martin Luther! "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers."

NEVER Many to sigh have strong emotions and they are amused, sions into away...