



The Family Circle.

"WELL DONE!"

"Well done, good and faithful servant,"
(Matt. xxv. 23).

"Well done!" How will the Master's greeting cheer them,
The faithful ones, who "knew and did his will"!
Who, when he sent them, swiftly ran his errands,
And when he stayed them "waited" and wore
"still"?

Some sent he forth to sow the seed "with weeping"—
Maybe their tears were needful for that soil;
But, doubtless, in the day of harvest-gladdness
"Rejoicing" shall be theirs instead of toil.

Some came with sunny smiles and floating footsteps—
Their field of labor, too, seemed bright and fair,
But whether "hundredfold" or only "thirty,"
That field will yield, the harvest shall declare.

Once more he calls the unemployed to labor:
The harvest is so great, the "hands" so few—
Oh, brother, sister, heed his call, I pray you!
Maybe the Master now "hath need" of you.

Your gold and silver, and your time, your talents
What glory are they bringing to his name?
Remember they are his, and when he cometh
"His own with usury" He then will claim!

He gave you gold that you might "feed the hungry"
And "clothe the naked," take the stranger in,
Find for the "sick" a quiet, kindly shelter,
Reclaim the fallen from a life of sin.

And are you doing this, or are you slighting
The calls for help that reach you day by day?
Oh, stewards of his wealth, be wise and earnest,
Lest he should take your stewardship away.

It will be sweet as evening twilight gathers,
And working hours are past for evermore,
To hear the Master's "Well done, faithful servant!"

When safe at last we reach you blessed shore.
—R. A. Beck.

LADDIE.

"He don't look such a baddish sort of young man," she said, when the door closed behind the observant Hyder; "and he seems to mind what you says pretty sharp. I thought as he was a gent hisself when he opened the door, as he hadn't got red breeches or gaiters or nothing, but I suppose you will put him into livery by and by?"

"Now, mother, you must have some tea. And you are not to talk till you have eaten something. Here! I'll pour out the tea." For the glories of the silver tea-pot were drawing her attention from its revivifying contents. "I hope they have made it good. Ah! I remember well what tea you used to make in that little brown tea-pot at home." It was very easy and pleasant to be kind to her, and make much of her now, when no one else was there. He enjoyed waiting on her and seeing her brighten up and revive under the combined influence of food, and warmth, and kindness. He liked to hear her admire and wonder at everything, and he laughed naturally and boyishly at her odd little, innocent remarks. If they two could have been always alone together, with no spying eyes and spiteful tongues, it would have been all right and pleasant, but as it was, it was quite impossible, and out of the question.

"It ain't the teapot, Laddie, as does it. It's just to let it stand till it's drawn thorough and no longer. Put it on the hob for ten minutes, say, I, but that's enough. I don't like stewed tea, and moreover it ain't wholesome neither. This is a fine room, Laddie, and no mistake. Why the parson ain't got one to hold a candle to it. I'd just like some of the Sunnybrook folk to have a look at it. It would make them open their eyes wide, I warrant!—to see me a-setting here like a lady, with this here carpet as soft as anything, and them curtains, and pictures, and all! I wonder whatever they would say if they could see! I suppose now, as there's a washus or a place out behind somewheres for them servants?"

Dr. Carter laughed at the idea of Mrs. Treasure the cook, and the two smart housemaids, let alone Mr. Hyder, being consigned to a washhouse at the back, and he explained the basement arrangements.

"Underground. Well! I never did! But I think I've heard tell of underground kitchens before, but I never would believe it. It must be terrible dark for the poor things, and damp moreover, and how poor, silly gals is always worrting to get places in London, passes me!"

Presently, when they had done tea, and gone back into the consulting-room, when the old woman was seated in the arm-chair, with her feet on the fender, and her gown turned up over her knees, Dr. Carter drew his chair up near hers, and prepared for his difficult task.

"Mother," he said, laying one of his hands caressingly on her arm (he was proud of his hands—it was one of his weaknesses that they were gentleman's hands, white and well shaped, and there was a plain gold strap-ring on the little finger, which hit exactly the right medium between severity and display, as a gentleman's ring should), "Mother, I wish you had written to tell me you were coming."

She took his hand between both her own, hard and horny, with the veins standing up like cord on the backs, rough and misshapen with years of hard work, but with a world of tender mother's love in every touch, that made his words stick in his throat and nearly choke him.

"I knew as you'd be pleased to see me, Laddie, come when I might or how I might."

"Of course I'm glad to see you, mother, very glad; and I was thinking just before you came in that I would run down to Sunnybrook to see you just before Christmas."

And then he went on to explain how different London life was to that at Sunnybrook, and how she would never get used to it or feel happy there, talking quickly and wrapping up his meaning in so many words and elaborations that at the end of half an hour the old woman had no more idea of what he meant than she had at the beginning, and was fairly mystified. She had a strange way, too, of upsetting all his skilful arguments with a simple word or two.

"Different from Sunnybrook? Yes, sure; but she'd get used to it like other folks. Not happy? Why she'd be happy anywheres with her Laddie. There, don't you fret yourself about me; as long as you're comfortable I don't mind nothing."

How could he make her understand and see the gulf that lay between them—her life and his? It needed much plainer speaking, a spade must be called a spade, and, somehow, it looked a very much more ugly spade when it was so called. How soon did she catch his meaning? He hardly knew, for he could not bear to look into her face and see the smile fade from her lips and the brightness from her eyes. He only felt her hand suddenly clasp his more tightly, as if he had tried to draw it away from her, and she grew silent, while he talked on quickly and nervously, telling her they would go together to-morrow and find a little snug cottage not far from London, with everything pretty and comfortable that heart could wish for, and a little maid to do the work, so that she need never lay her hand to anything; and how he would come to see her often, very often, perhaps once a week. Still never a word for or against, of pleasure or of pain, till he said,

"You would like it, mother, wouldn't you?"

And then she answered slowly and faintly,

"I'm aweary, Laddie, too tired like for new plans; and maybe, dearie, too old."

"You must go to bed," he said, with a burst of overwhelming compunction. "I ought not to have let you stop up like this. I should have kept what I had to say till to-morrow when you were rested. Come, think no more of it to-night, everything will look brighter to-morrow. I'll show you your bedroom."

And so he took her upstairs, such a lot of stairs to the old country legs; but her curiosity overcame her fatigue sufficiently to make her peep into the double drawing-room where the gas-lamp in the street threw weird lights and shadows on the coiling and touched unexpectedly on

parts of mirrors or gilded cornices, giving a mysterious effect to the groups of furniture and the chandelier hanging in its holland covering.

"'Tis mighty fine!" she said, "but an unked place to my mind; like a church-yard somat."

Her bedroom did not look "unked," however, with a bright fire burning, and the inviting chintz-curtained bed and the crisp muslin-covered toilet-table, with two candles lighted. In the large looking-glass on the toilet-table the figure of the little old woman was reflected among the elegant comforts of the room, looking all the more small and shabby, and old, and out of place in contrast with her surroundings.

"Now make haste to bed, there's a good old mother; my room is next to this if you want anything, and I shall soon come up to bed. I hope you'll be very comfortable. Good night."

And then he left her with a kiss, and she stood for some minutes quite still, looking at the scene reflected in the glass before her, peering curiously and attentively at it.

"And so Laddie is ashamed of his old mother," she said softly, with a little sigh; "and it ain't no wonder!"

As Dr. Carter sat down again in his consulting-room by himself, he told himself that he had done wisely, though he had felt and inflicted pain, and still felt very sore and ruffled. But it was wisest, and practically kindest and best for her in the end, more surely for her happiness and comfort; so there was no need to regret it, or for that tiresome little feeling in one corner of his heart that seemed almost like remorse. This is no story-book world of chivalry, romance, and poetry, and to get on in it you must just lay aside sentimental fancies and act by the light of reason and common sense. And then he settled down to arrange the details of to-morrow's plans, and jotted down on a piece of paper a few memoranda of suitable places, times of trains, &c., and resolved that he would spare no pains or expense in making her thoroughly comfortable. He even wrote a note or two to put off some appointments, and felt quite gratified with the idea that he was sacrificing something on his mother's account. The clock struck two as he rose to go up to bed, and he went up feeling much more composed and satisfied with himself, having pretty successfully argued and reasoned down his troublesome, morbid misgivings. He listened at his mother's door; but all was quiet, and he made haste into bed himself, feeling he had gone through a good deal that day.

He was just turning over to sleep when his door opened softly and his mother came in—such a queer, funny, old figure, with a shawl wrapped round her and a very large nightcap on—one of the old-fashioned sort, with very broad, flapping frills. She had a candle in her hand, and set it down on the table by his bed. He jumped up as she came in.

"Why, mother, what's the matter? Not in bed? Are you ill?"

"There, there! lie down; there ain't nothing wrong. But I've been listening for ye this long time. 'Tis fifteen year and more since I tucked you up in bed, and you used to say as you never slept so sweet when I didn't do it."

She made him lie down, and smoothed his pillow, and brushed his hair off his forehead, and tucked the clothes round him, and kissed him as she spoke,

"And I thought as I'd like to do it for you once more. Good-night, Laddie, good-night."

And then she went away quickly, and did not hear him call "Mother! oh mother!" after her, for the carefully tucked-in clothes were flung off and Laddie was out of bed, with his hand on the handle of the door, and then—second thoughts being cooler, if not better—"she had better sleep," Dr. Carter said, and got back into bed.

But sleep did not come at his call; he tossed about feverishly and restlessly, with his mind tossing hither and thither as much as his body, the strong wind of his pride and will blowing against the running tide of his love and conscience, and making a rough sea between them, which would not allow of any repose. And which of them was the strongest?

After long and fierce debate with himself he came to a conclusion which at all events brought peace along with it. "Come what may," he said, "I will keep my mother with me, let people say or think what they will; even if it costs me Violet herself, as most likely it will. I can't turn my mother out in her old age, so there's an end of it." And there and then he went to sleep.

It must have been soon after this that he woke with a start, with a sound in his ears like the shutting of the street-door. It was still quite dark, night to Londoners, morning to country people, who were already going to their work and labor, and Dr. Carter turned himself over and went to sleep again, saying, "It was my fancy or a dream," while his old mother stood shivering in the cold November morning outside his door, murmuring,

"I'll never be a shame to my boy, my Laddie; God bless him!"

(To be Continued.)

GREBOE JUSTICE.

Around Capé Palmas, on the west coast of Africa, lives a tribe of strong, daring natives called the "Greboes." They have a curious way of settling their personal difficulties. When one man strikes another he does not strike back. He simply turns on his heels, and starts towards the town—hallooing at the top of his voice. He may be twice as big as the man who struck him, and able to whip two of him; but no matter, away he goes at full speed and full voice.

When he reaches the town, he kills the first eatable animal that comes within reach, be it bullock, sheep, or goat; then starts for another, marking his track with dead animals, fowls, etc., until satisfied. The townsmen start in the wake of the offended citizen, gathering all the victims of his wrath and carrying them to the "palava," or court-house, where they prepare a feast and have a royal good time.

This done, all the parties who have suffered loss in this fracas come forward and put in their claims, and compel the man who struck the first blow to pay the entire cost of the whole affair. Should the offender be poor and unable to pay, the law requires his next of kin to foot the bill; should they not be able, then the next nearest kin, and so on until the full damages are paid, or the entire circle of the offender's relations is made bankrupt. Thus they compel a man's relatives to keep an eye over his behavior and to share the responsibility of his wrong doings.

The *Missionary World* says: "You may well imagine that personal encounters are not very frequent, under such circumstances. How do you think it would do to introduce this bit of heathen law into this enlightened land?"

TAKING VS. ASKING.

I asked a respectable farmer one day, whether he had salvation in Christ.

"No, indeed, sir, I have not, but my wife and I are both very anxious for it. There's not a day but we read a chapter in the Bible, and we ask God to give it to us."

"You are quite wrong," I added. "Your business is to take it. God is asking you to be reconciled. What business have you asking God for salvation, or to be reconciled to you, when he says here, he 'was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself? Take him at his word, and rest on the finished work of Christ for sin.'"

"And do you mean to say, sir, that I have not even to ask for it?"

"No, for the work is finished, and God wants you to believe Jesus' blood is an atonement for your sin."

"Well, sir, I never thought of that before, that it was so free I hadn't even to ask for it. I do believe in Jesus, that his death is sufficient for all my sins."

"And Jesus tells you that 'he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.'"

"I see it all. I never saw it before."

Some months after, I met him, a happy believer, by taking the gift of God—eternal life. He said his wife had accepted it too, and now they did not ask God for salvation, but they just thanked him for it.—*Selected.*