

The Family Circle.

WORDS.

Words are lighter than the cloud foam
Of the restless ocean spray,
Vainer than the trembling shadow
That the next hour steals away.
By the fall of summer raindrops
Is the air as deeply stirred;
And the rose leaf that we tread on
Will outlive a word.

Yet, on the dull silence breaking
With a lightning flash, a word,
Bearing endless desolation
On its blighting wings, I heard;
Earth can forge no keener weapon,
Dealing surer death and pain,
And the cruel echo answered
Through long years again.

I have known one word hang starlike
O'er a dreary waste of years,
And it only shone the brighter
Looked at through a mist of tears;
While a weary wanderer gathered
Hope and heart on life's dark way,
By its faithful promise shining
Clearer day by day.

I have known a spirit calmer
Than the calmest lake, and clear
As the heavens that gazed upon it,
With no wave or hope or fear;
But a storm had swept across it,
And its deepest depths were stirred
(Never, never more to slumber),
Only by a word.

I have known a word more gentle
Than the breath of summer air;
In a listening heart it nestled,
And it lived forever there.
Not the panting of its prison
Stirred it ever, night or day,
Only with the heart's last throbbing
Could it fade away.

Words are mighty, words are living:
Serpents with their venomous stings,
O, bright angels crowding round us,
With heaven's light upon their wings:
Every word has its own spirit,
True or false, that never dies;
Every word man's lips have uttered
Echoes in God's skies.

—Adelaide A. Proctor.

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MARJORIE'S CANADIAN WINTER.

BY AGNES MACLE MACHAK.

CHAPTER VI.—CONTINUED

At teatime, when her uncle came in, late and tired, as he often did, Marjorie's thoughts suddenly reverted to his poor patients, in whom she had felt so much interested, and she surprised him by asking how they were getting on and if they were really so very poor.

Dr. Ramsay seldom spoke, in his own family, of the sad sights he was constantly seeing. For one thing, he himself wanted change of thought and feeling when he got home, and for another, he did not think it right to depress the natural joyousness of youth by burdening it to soon with the weight of the sorrow and suffering of life. But when, at any time, he felt that his children's sympathy could be awakened with useful result, he did not hesitate to appeal to it.

'As sad a case as I ever met with,' he replied. 'But how did you hear of it, my dear?'

Marjorie briefly told of Miss Mostyn's visit of appeal to Mrs. West.

'Ah! well, I'm glad she went to her. And I hope she will give something handsome, as she could well afford to do.'

'She said the firm had done something for him already, but she gave Miss Mostyn something—a dollar—I think,' replied Marjorie, hesitating in her reply between the desire to give her uncle information, and an instinctive fear of violating the obligations of hospitality.

Dr. Ramsay said nothing, but made a slight though expressive grimace, as he looked at his wife.

Mrs. Ramsay remarked gently, 'Well, probably she may feel interest enough to go to see them, and if she does that, she will feel that she must do more.'

'No, I'm sure she won't,' exclaimed Marjorie, her indignation now thoroughly revived, 'for she said she hadn't time, and that such things always upset her so.'

Dr. Ramsay laughed outright this time. 'Poor woman!' he exclaimed; 'it's well

that we doctors don't have such superfine feelings! No, Alan, no remarks, if you please. We have no right to judge others for not seeing their privileges. But you can tell Gerald about the case. It would be a useful way for him to spend some of his superfluous pocket money. And I have taken care that they shan't starve for the present. And your aunt is going to see them to-morrow, so you can go with her if you like, Marjorie, to see for yourself. Between her and the charitable dispensary, the poor sick ones have been kept supplied with nourishing food. And as usual, the poor neighbours have been very kind.'

Marjorie's thoughts went swiftly back to the 'angel' her father had seen, and what he had said about her. That evening, as she finished her journal-letter, she concluded her narrative with the following reflection:

'You said once that there were a great many "half-heathens" in New York. I didn't know what you meant then, but I think there must be a good many in Montreal, too. Ada's mother, who is so rich and has such a beautiful house and everything she wants, seemed to grudge to give a dollar to a starving family though the father had got hurt in Mr. West's business! So I think the light must be "shining in darkness" here, too. I'm so glad you sent me the Northern Lights in print, for I'm sure they'll all like it here. I'm sure Uncle and Aunt Ramsay have the "light of life," and I'm going to try to "trust and follow," so as to have it too!'

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROFESSOR'S STORY.

Sunday was another bright clear day, decidedly milder, so that there was nothing to interfere with the pleasure of being out of doors in the pure, bracing air. Marjorie, in her warm squirrel furs, with her dark gray eyes sparkling and her rather pale cheeks brightly tinted by the frosty air, looked, her aunt thought, much improved already, as they took their way to church on Sunday morning. The long anxiety and watching during her father's illness, and the depression and dread of the impending separation, had told a good deal on her always sensitive organization; but a reaction had just set in, and her natural shy reserve was beginning to wear off already under the influence of her brighter spirits and the liveliness of her cousins. Marion and she seemed like old friends as they walked together to the Presbyterian Church which Dr. Ramsay attended. Her father and she had been wont to go to the Congregational Church at home, but she knew her father had little respect for the "isms" which separate Christians, and Dr. Ramsay, though attached to the church in which his forefathers had lived and died, had just as little respect for churchism as had Mr. Fleming. 'If you don't love other churches, you can't really love your own, for you haven't got your Master's spirit in you,' he would say to his 'churchy' friends, both in his own communion and others.

And Dr. Ramsay had friends in every denomination of faith. He met them at sick beds and in hospitals, where they learned to know each other, and to know, too, that there are times when all human hearts must respond to the same touch—the gentlest yet strongest touch of all.

It was pleasant to walk to church through the throngs of church-going people that crossed one another's path in every direction—people of all classes and positions. Sometimes they met a little group of long-robed ecclesiastics, and Marion would explain which particular confraternity they belonged to, or some gray Sisters of Charity would be seen at the head of a little band of children.

The service was very like the one she was accustomed to, but the prayer for 'Her Majesty the Queen' reminded her that she was no longer under her own country's flag. And yet she did not feel like 'a stranger and a foreigner,' worshipping there with those who spoke the same tongue, prayed to the same God, loved the same Saviour and sang almost the same dear old hymns that they used to sing at home. Nor did the people look very different, except in their warmer dress, at least not the female portion of the congregation. She thought the men did not look quite so keen and anxious, and she noticed more

stout and comfortable-looking elderly gentlemen than she was accustomed to see in church. And she thought there were a great many pretty children.

Her observations rather distracted her attention from the sermon, for Marjorie's thoughts were very apt to go off roaming in the direction of some passing fancy, which was one reason why her father liked her to bring him reports of the sermons she heard. But she thought that her father would have liked this one, which was her usual way of estimating things which she did not feel herself competent to criticise, and her father had never encouraged her in the slightest attempt at criticising a sermon, since he said, 'if you listen in such a spirit, you will lose all the good of it.' One thought she carried away for her next letter to her father—because it was so like his own words: that the patient learner in Christ's school would find, like the learner in every other school, that every lesson well learned from the Master's teaching, is only a stepping-stone to the next step of progress in the upward line. After dinner Marjorie went with Marion to her room, and they had a nice quiet talk over their favorite Sunday books. Marjorie was much older in mind for her years than was her cousin, so that they could talk without any sense of inequality. Marion was not specially poetical, but she loved Frances Havergal's poems for their devotional sweetness, and she enjoyed reading her favorites to Marjorie, to whom they were new. And Marjorie in turn read to Marion some of the poems from the Christian Year and her precious copy of Whittier, which her father had taught her to know and love by reading them to her on Sunday evening, in his expressive and musical voice.

Marion, however, went off at the usual hour to teach her Sunday-school class, and Marjorie went with her aunt to see the poor family. They lived in one of the old, narrow, dingy streets that abound in the St. Antoine suburb; and it was sad enough to see them, the sick parents and the four little children, pent up in one room no bigger than her uncle's dining-room. Marjorie thought of the spacious magnificence of the Wests' luxurious home, and wondered, as many a young soul has wondered, how such differences can be. But she noticed with surprise how brightly the man spoke; how gratefully he referred to Dr. Ramsay as the means, under God, of saving his life, and his poor wife's life too; and how they could never thank Mrs. Ramsay and Miss Mostyn enough for all their kindness; and how they hoped, please God, to see better days, for when he got the wooden leg the doctor had sent for, he should be able to work as well as ever. And it made the tears come to Marjorie's eyes to see the loving tenderness with which he looked at the poor little baby when Mrs. Ramsay took it into her arms, and with which he remarked that 'the little thing was welcome, though it did come in hard times.'

'Well, Marjorie,' said her aunt, as they left the house, 'you see there's always some light in the darkness, after all, if people only open their eyes to see it.'

The expression sent Marjorie's thoughts off to her father and their talk. So when she had come in, and had carried down her books to read by the drawing-room fire, she re-read the story of the Northern Lights which she had put into her Bible. And when the four younger children came in from Sunday-school and Norman and Effie rushed to her demanding a story, and Jack and Millie endorsed the request, she thought she could not do better than tell them, in the simplest rendering she could improvise, the story of the Northern Lights.

They all listened attentively, though Jack and Millie appreciated the allegory more than the two little ones. The wintry dusk was closing in and the firelight only lighted up the room, so Marjorie did not notice that Alan and Gerald had stolen quietly in just before she had concluded.

'Where did you get that story, Marjorie?' asked Alan; 'you'll have to tell it over again to us.' Then Gerald explained that he had come to ask if Marjorie would go to the Eng-

lish Cathedral that evening with Ada, and Mr. Ramsay had said he might stay for tea and take Marjorie to meet Ada at church, if she wished to go. Marjorie was very willing to agree to this arrangement, for she liked the Episcopal service very much, and Alan told her she would hear both good music and a good sermon.

'There's Professor Duncan!' exclaimed Millie, as her ear caught his voice talking to her father in the hall, and she and Jack ran to meet their favorite. He came in with Dr. Ramsay, one of his arms resting on the shoulder of each of the two children. His strong face was lighted up with a most benignant smile in which he included Marjorie, when she was formally introduced by the eager Millie.

'Ah! so this is the young lady I met in the bookstore yesterday. And so you are Mrs. Ramsay's niece, my dear? Do you know I was looking at you and trying to think what the likeness was that was puzzling me! I see it now, though. I once traveled to New York with your father, and that is a face, and a man, too, that one doesn't easily forget.'

Marjorie colored deeply with pleasure at this mention of her father. And then Millie exclaimed:

'O, Professor Duncan! you must make her tell you the story she has just been telling us. It's such a pretty one, and then it's a parable, and you like parables. It's about the Northern Lights.'

'I'll be delighted to hear it,' said the professor, settling himself comfortably in one easy-chair, while Dr. Ramsay threw himself into another. 'I'm just as fond of stories as these folks here—and much fonder of parables I know, than I was at their age.'

Marjorie had often been exhorted by her father to do a thing—when she was asked to do it—as well as she could, and without making any fuss about it, as some girls were apt to do. So she overcame her shyness of strangers, and only said that she would rather read the story as her father had sent it to her in print.

So a lamp was lighted, and Marjorie read it in a very clear and expressive voice, trying to reproduce it just as her father had first read it to her. Mrs. Ramsay and Marion had come in too, and all listened attentively, but Professor Duncan never took his deepset eyes off the young reader till the last word had been read.

'Do you know, I like that very much?' he said, 'capital idea!' It's just what I'm always telling these children about in some form or other. We've had just such solitary Northern Lights here in Canada, shining in the darkness. And by the way, Ramsay, what do you think about brave Gordon all alone there? Do you think Stewart will be able to manage to reach him?'

'I wish they could do it a little quicker,' said Dr. Ramsay. 'And I wish poor Gordon could know how many hearts are throbbing with eager desire to hear of his relief. It would cheer him up a bit in that terrible isolation.'

'Not alone; his Father is with him,' said Professor Duncan solemnly. 'We may be sure of that! If every man lived as "seeing the invisible," you may be sure he does.'

'Right, Duncan, right!' exclaimed Dr. Ramsay; 'would we were all like him in that.'

But Millie was eager to make her request of Professor Duncan. It was that he would tell them, for Marjorie's benefit, her favorite story of Isaac Jogues.

'Well, I've told it so often that I should think you would know it by heart. But I don't mind telling it again if it won't bore your mother and father.'

'Your stories never bore me, Duncan, you know very well,' said Dr. Ramsay.

(To be continued.)

At the presentation of the pulpit robes to a brother pastor in Greenock the other evening (says the *British Weekly*) the Rev. Charles Jerdan said that on donning the gown in Arbroath Church, he remarked to its possessor that it seemed a good one and a new one. 'Yes,' replied his friend, 'but you should have seen my old one. I could have preached on the parable of the Prodigal Son in character with it.'