



The Family Circle.

SOMETIME.

BY MRS. MAY RILEY SMITH.

Sometime, when all life's lessons have been learned,

And sun and stars forevermore have set,
The things which our weak judgments here
have spurned,

The things o'er which we grieved with lashes
wet,

Will flash before us, out of life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue,

And we shall see how all God's plans were
right,

And how what seemed reproof was love most
true.

And we shall see how, while we frown and
sigh,

God's plans go on as best for you and me;
How, when we called, he heeded not our cry

Because his wisdom to the end could see.
And e'en as prudent parents disallow

Too much of sweet to craving babyhood,
So God, perhaps, is keeping from us now

Life's sweetest things, because it seemeth
good.

And if, sometimes, commingled with life's
wine,

We find the wormwood, and rebel and shrink,
Be sure a wiser hand than yours or mine

Pours out this potion for our lips to drink.
And if some friend we love is lying low

Where human kisses cannot reach his face,
Oh, do not blame the loving Father so,

But wear your sorrow with obedient grace!
And you shall shortly know that lengthened

breath
Is not the sweetest gift God sends his
friend,

And that, sometimes, the sable pall of death
Conceals the fairest boon his love can send.

If we could push ajar the gates of life,
And stand within, and all God's workings

see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife,
And for each mystery could find a key.

But not to-day. Then be content, poor heart!
God's plans, like lilies, pure and white un-

fold.
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart;
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.

And if, through patient toil, we reach the
land

Where tired feet, with sandals loose, may
rest,

When we shall clearly know and understand,
I think that we will say, "God knew the

best!"
—N. Y. Observer.

DORCAS FEARING'S EXPERIMENT.

"Well, Joshua, how did the boys act to-day?" asked Mrs. Fearing, on her husband's return from Sabbath-school.

The deacon polished his bald head with his red bandanna, and sighed heavily. Plainly the lines had not fallen unto him "in pleasant places!"

"Act! Don't ask me, Dorcas. If they were possessed by the father of mischief they couldn't torment a man more. Just look here!"

Dorcas "looked," and threw up both hands in astonishment. The back of her good man's best blue coat was ripped to the waist.

"Why, J-o-s-h-u-a Fearing, I should think you'd been fighting!"

"I'd feel better if I had, Dorcas," was the fervent response, "either they or I would have got it pretty bad, wife. The Lord forgive me for harboring such a spirit, but they are enough to try the patience of Job. They were amazing still during the lesson—though I heered one titter a little when I was offering the opening prayer—so I put the doctrines to them pretty strong, hoping I might thereby sow a little good seed; but before the superintendent had given out the last time my whole class left the vestry! Never said a word to me, but clattered off without leave. When I sprang up after them the settee riz right up behind me, I heered a rip, and there I was pinned to the seat! Miss Slocumb's class of gals was tittering, everybody was smiling—I don't know as I blame 'em either," added the deacon meekly.

"My hair e'en almost stands on end when I think how ridiculous I looked!"

The smile that merry Mrs. Fearing could not repress did not soothe her husband's wounded feelings.

"Those scamps have played their last trick on me!" he said, tilting his chair back, and thrusting his hand into his coat pocket; but

the chair quickly came to the floor, the deacon howling with pain—the pocket was bristling with pins! This was a serious affair. Mrs. Fearing was really vexed as she doctored the scratched and bleeding fingers. That afternoon, when the superintendent called, the deacon resigned his class.

"I've done the best I could with 'em," said he, when urged to keep it longer. "I'll have to retire from the field, as every teacher they have had has done."

"It's a pity somebody can't manage those boys!" observed Mrs. Fearing, as she recalled their bright, intelligent faces; and, despite their pranks, her motherly heart yearned strangely over them.

"I can't find a teacher in the parish for them," said the superintendent, sadly. "I did hope they'd respect your age and position."

"They wouldn't respect the Apostle Paul," groaned the retiring teacher, as he recalled the many times his dignity had been hurt.

"Often have I longed to apply Solomon's rod of correction."

"Mrs. Fearing did not agree with her husband here; and somehow, loyal wife though she was, she fancied her husband did not understand the boys. Mrs. Fearing was very tender to every living creature, her heart was specially open to the boys, for her only son slept under the sod in the old churchyard.

How the lonely mother-heart longed for his freckled face, the short boyish figure, and the mad-cap pranks that she concealed from the sterner parent! And, as she heard the two decide, as a last resort, to lay the case before each parent, and perhaps disband the class, a half-formed wish sprang to her lips.

"I wish I had the class."

Her good man gasped with surprise, but the superintendent said:

"Do try it, Mrs. Fearing."

"It's an insane experiment," said the deacon, hotly. "My wife shall not submit to their insults; I positively forbid it, Dorcas!"

Probably the deacon took back that hasty command, for Dorcas did take the class the next Sabbath. He drilled her upon the lesson beforehand, shook his head many times over her illogical treatment of doctrines, expounded and referred to prophecy, until the dear little woman knew less about the lesson than at first.

"Just keep to that course of reasoning, and you'll convince them," he said, as he "armed and equipped" her with text-books and commentary. "Be severe with Harry Johnson, he's the ringleader in all mischief."

Mrs. Fearing quietly left the learned books and the logic under the pew cushions, and armed only with the Bible and womanly tact, started, after the service, with fear and trembling, for the Sabbath-school class.

Before introducing her, the superintendent offered to "give the lads a few hints about future conduct."

"Dear me, no!" cried Mrs. Fearing, "that would spoil all."

As the deacon's wife took her place, there were signs of excitement among the boys. Harry Johnson nudged his neighbor, and said in a cracked voice:

"Them boys do pester my Joshua so, I thought I'd spell him awhile!"

Before this could be "passed around," Mrs. Fearing spoke:

"Good morning, young gentlemen!"

"Young gentlemen!" Somehow this made the young scamps feel a bit like gentlemen.

"My husband will not be with you for some time"—the wife strove to hide her lord's retreat—"so I offered myself as a substitute, not so much in the capacity of teacher as friend."

Mrs. Fearing paused for breath after this unusual effort at speechifying. "I don't know as much as I ought about the Bible, although I love to read it more than any other book. I think I should enjoy studying it with some bright young scholars, if agreeable to you all. But the great reason why I felt such an interest in this class was because many of you were playmates of my dear Eben."

They all remembered the bright, merry boy whose life had been so brief, and there was a deep hush as the mother talked of her dead.

She had struck a plaintive chord in their young hearts; in Harry Johnson's especially—who could recall many a prank with the deacon's son—and their boyish faces were very solemn as they crowded about her. Then, with rare tact, she brought in the Scripture lesson, and before their minds had returned to careless thoughts, they were asking and answering questions.

Mrs. Fearing talked with them just as she used to talk with Eben, and with the same result. Eben was always restive under his father's verbose expositions, and tempted to some comical bit of fun; so she refrained from subjects beyond their young minds.

This humble little woman interested them so much that they were actually surprised when the signal was given for closing the session.

Then came something the deacon's class never forgot. Mrs. Fearing invited them to spend an evening at her house.

It is impossible to depict the deacon's terror at the prospect of such dangerous guests.

When the evening came, he fled to the minister's. But everything passed off decorously. The house wasn't torn down or burnt up; the boys, in their Sunday best and best behavior, were so still that their hostess thought they surely were "ailing." The good lady fed them with her daintiest, and treated them like princes, instead of reprobates, and they appreciated it.

"Staving woman, she is!" said Harry Johnson, on his way home, with a slice of plum cake in his pocket. "I don't want no better teacher. Just let me get my paw on any fellow that sarces her!"

In a thousand ways the deacon's wife won their hearts. Every Sabbath they were sure of a warm welcome from the quiet little woman, and the old, old story, told in her quaint, apt way, sent an arrow of conviction to the conscience of more than one of her listeners.

There came a day, a sad day for the class, when the seat in their midst was vacant, and the pleasant voice made music in their ears no more. Dorcas Fearing had gone to meet her boy. The old deacon, as he "lifted up his voice and wept," was scarcely a greater mourner than the awkward, overgrown boys whose wayward feet had been gently guided by her into the Saviour's "paths of pleasantness and peace."

Who can estimate the result of Dorcas Fearing's experiment?—Helen C. Pearson, in the *Congregationalist*.

TIMELY ADVICE, AND ITS REWARD.

"Half a loaf is better than no bread, Charlie!"

Little Mabel Castleton said this wistfully, her eyes, as she spoke, wandering to the cradle, where two curly heads were lying.

"But when one has had the whole loaf, May, one does not exactly relish the half-rations," said Charlie, moodily.

But his eyes followed his wife's, to the cosy nest of babies.

"It is a bad time of year to be out of a situation," said Mabel, after a long silence; "and how many of those we know are idle! It would not be easy to find employment now."

"You think I had better remain with Mr. Miffin?"

"Do tell me exactly what he said to you."

"The substance of what he said was this: Business is so very dull that he is obliged to curtail his expenses, and he must discharge some of the clerks. I have been with him for ten years, and he was pleased to say that I am very useful to him, and he is unwilling to part with me. But he can give me only half my present salary, though he promises to raise it again when the business prospects brighten. I don't know what to do. We are none too rich at my present salary."

"Yet we have saved something each month! Besides, dear, we have not tried to be economical. There are many ways in which I could save."

"And make a perfect slave of yourself?"

"Not at all! I have plenty of leisure time, now that May and Bella amuse each other. Come, Charlie, accept Mr. Miffin's offer. You may hear of something better even if you remain there, but don't throw yourself out of a situation in the dead of winter, for my sake and the children's."

The last argument conquered. Charlie knew only too well that it would be almost hopeless to look for a new situation, for the whole town was echoing Mr. Miffin's cry of hard times. The small nest egg in the bank would soon melt away when it became the sole support of four. And so, kissing Mabel, he promised to follow her advice.

But it caused his pride a sore wrench. He had entered the service of his present employer at seventeen, and slowly, steadily gaining favor, by dint of faithfully fulfilling every duty, he had won his way to the desk of head clerk. Not until he secured this position, and the good salary accompanying it, would he ask Mabel to be his wife, furnishing a pretty cottage home out of his savings, and giving her a thoroughly comfortable income for housekeeping expenses. He was not extravagant, but it pleased him to see his wife well dressed, to give her an efficient servant, to have his children ever presentable, his table well appointed.

All this had been easy upon his salary, and there had been something added, for three years, to the little bank fund. But to do all this upon half the present income would be simply impossible. House rent must be met, and the sum remaining each month would need to be carefully calculated, to meet all the expenses, leaving but little margin for pleasure or extravagance of dress.

Then, what would Will say?

Will Castleton was Charlie's cousin, who had been his life-long companion. Together they had left the school-room for business position. Will entering the corn warehouse of Harvey & Russell at the same time that Charlie had taken the place in Mr. Miffin's timber office. Shoulder to shoulder the young men had worked their way up, till this finan-

cial crisis brought all business men into temporary difficulties of greater or less magnitude.

Will had expressed the warmest indignation at the proposal made to his cousin, strongly advising him to throw up his situation, and "see how old Miffin would get along without him," and Charlie, before seeing Mabel, was quite willing to follow his advice.

He knew Will would think him mean-spirited to remain upon half salary, and yet Mabel was right when she said that "half a loaf was better than no bread."

And while Charlie Castleton was thus weighing the pros and cons of his decision, Mr. Miffin was listening to the counsel of his old friend and chum, the senior partner of the firm, when it had been "Gardiner & Miffin," and who, though he had retired some years before, was still the strong friend and frequent adviser of his former partner.

"It is a mistake, Miffin," he said. "You had better send young Castleton about his business and engage an entirely new book-keeper. You will find half-pay will mean half service, mark my words!"

"But I might search C—from end to end, and not find a clerk competent to take Castleton's place."

"Then pay him his full salary."

"I cannot do it, unless I reduce the number of salesmen, and I am short-handed now. There is but one way to keep my head above water. You see Clarke's failure involves me heavily, and—"

And the worried man of business entered into long explanations of his difficulties, not necessary to repeat here.

It touched Charlie Castleton deeply, when entering the counting-house to announce his determination to remain in his old position, to see how the face of his employer brightened. He had been sitting in a despondent attitude, looking over the letters, the lines of care strongly marked upon his face.

As Charlie spoke the large eyes grew brighter, and he smiled as he said—

"Thank you, Castleton. It would have caused me serious embarrassment to lose you, and I am heartily glad you will stay. I trust you will not long be obliged to take a smaller salary, but circumstances compel me to economize."

"You have been a kind employer to me for ten years," answered Charlie, "and, if I am really of any value, more than another would be in my place, I will not desert you."

And, looking into the careworn face that trouble was marking more deeply than age, Charlie resolved to serve Mr. Miffin more faithfully in his perplexities than in his more prosperous days.

It was not long before the old gentleman felt the sympathy of his young clerk, and looked to him as he had never done before, for advice as well as service. He admitted him to confidential relations, explaining the difficulties caused by the failure of other firms, some heavily indebted to the house of John Miffin, others upon whom he had depended for goods obtained upon credit.

Day by day, as the hard trying winter wore away, the two grew faster friends; and, so far from lessening his work, Charlie found himself willingly lifting some of his employer's burdens upon his own shoulders. He gave more time to business, and was gaining an insight into it that opportunity had never before given him; and Mabel, at home, was bravely taking her diminished share of the loaf with a smiling face and cheerful heart. As far as might be she kept from Charlie the knowledge of her domestic economies; but some of them were apparent. The woman whose competent aid demanded high wages, was dismissed, and a half-grown girl engaged to mind the babies; while Mabel cooked, washed, ironed, and served, meeting difficulties with a courageous heart. She had never been a drone in the world's hive, having been a busy little dressmaker before Charlie Castleton won her heart, and took her to preside over his pretty home. But for three years of her married life she had been much petted, and there were many pleasures to be put aside, many shillings to be well weighed before they were spent.

It was with a heart full of pardonable triumph that the young couple, at the end of the first year of reduced pay, found that they were still out of debt, and had not touched the nest egg in the bank, though there was a fresh arrival to share in the family income.

"You see, Charlie, we made the half a loaf go round," said Mabel, as they went carefully over the year's expense book.

"There are no crumbs," he said, with a wry face.

"Never mind, it was better than idleness!"

"You are right, and there is more than that, May. I have been able to help Mr. Miffin more than I ever could have done in our old relationship to each other. His perplexities made him long for some one to whom he could speak confidentially; and, when the ice was once broken, he took me fully into his confidence. I could often suggest a way out of a difficulty that had not occurred to him; it was