



The Family Circle.

WHATSOEVER.

BY MARGARET J. PRESTON.

One day in stress of need I prayed:
"Dear Father, thou hast bid me bring
All wants to thee; so, unafraid,
I ask thee for this little thing
Round which my hopes so keenly cling;
And yet remembering what thou art—
So dread, so wondrous, so divine—
I marvel that I have the heart
To tell thee of this wish of mine!

"Thy heavens are strewn with worlds on worlds,
Thy star-dust powders reachless space;
System on system round Thee whirls
Who sittest in the central place
Of Being, while before Thy face
The universe hangs like a bead
Of dew, upon whose arc is shown,
With but reflected flash indeed,
Godhood's magnificence alone.

"And when I think, Our world is one,
But one amid the countless band
That in its daily course doth run
Its golden circuit through Thy hand,
And that its peopled millions stand
Always before thee, even as I—
Sad suppliants with their pleadings dumb,
Waiting for every hour's supply—
I wonder that I dare to come!

"The thing I ask thee for—how small
How trivial, must it seem to thee!
Yet, Lord, thou knowest, who knowest all,
It is no little thing to me,
So weak, so human as I be!
Therefore I make my prayer to-day,
And as a father pitieth, then
Grant me this little thing, I pray
Through the one sacred Name. Amen!"

I had my wish. The little thing
So needful to my heart's content
Was given to my petitioning,
And comforted I onward went
With tranquil soul, wherein were blent
Trust and thanksgiving. For I know
Now, as I had not known before,
That whatsoever's meaning: so,
I cavil not nor question more.
—*Illus. Chris. Weekly.*

THE ARCHER'S MAGAZINE CLUB.

It was spring time when the Archers moved from their home in a thriving town into the country, beginning, as it were, a new life on the farm. Mr. Archer had been seriously ill and did not seem to rally or find himself able to carry on his accustomed business, so the doctor said he must go into the country and dig in mother earth, and interest himself in new pursuits, if he would save his life and health to himself and his family.

Personally this was not distasteful to him, as he had been brought up upon a farm. With Mrs. Archer, who had always resided in town, it was different, and she felt she should hardly know how to adapt herself to the new ways required; still, for her husband's sake, she cheerfully prepared to make the required change.

As for the children, they were half glad and half sorry. During the spring and summer, however, they found themselves constantly delighted with new scenes and new undertakings, while all went to work with hearty good will to help make it home-like at the farm, and to have their in-door ways as much as possible like their former home.

But as summer passed and autumn came apace, with its shortened days for outdoor pursuits and its lengthened evenings for gathering around the evening lamp, there began to come a feeling of something wanting in ways of recreation, and in partial deprivations of privileges before enjoyed.

"What are we to do for general reading," said Mrs. Archer one desolate, rainy evening, "except the usual papers which the mail brings to us, and that is meagre compared to our opportunities at home?" as she always called their former home thus. "Here there is no public library to draw books from when we choose, no cousins, or old friends to lend us a new book or to exchange magazines and other reading with, as we have been accustomed to, or even familiar acquaintances to talk over matters of interest with as formerly, to say nothing of entertainments outside of home."

"And we read our papers through so quickly," said Alice, "when we have so little here to take our attention outside, and it is such a long time to wait for the day the new ones come."

"Yes," said Mrs. Archer, "and we have our Harper's read the first week, whereas it used to last a month to take up now and then, and no friends to exchange with for the other magazines to keep the run of them at all. Something must be done or we shall stagnate, though with papa getting so strong and well we ought to make the best of these little discomforts and deprivations, I suppose."

"There is no virtue in settling down to making the best of any thing which can be remedied," said Mr. Archer, "and if we may not have our former privileges we may do something towards regaining them, and at the same time help others to more variety in way of reading."

"What do you say Harry and Alice to helping try to get up a magazine club among the young people, at least interest them, while your mother and I will bring up the subject to our neighbors?"

"But," said Mrs. Archer, "these people here seem, many of them, to care little for real literature, while some of them say they have no time to read even their weekly newspapers."

"It is not so with all that I know," said Mr. Archer, "for I lived in the country in my youth and found some as hungry for books, or even more so, than many of our old friends who had them in abundance. We have as yet become really little acquainted with our townspeople here, and we may find many ready to join us in our enterprise if we work in the right way."

"I had not thought of it in this light," said Mrs. Archer, "but I do recall now with what a loving look Emma Downs glanced over the volumes in our bookcase, and how absorbed she became in one of the illustrated articles in our magazine."

And from this the Archers began, without any regular plans, to carry on their work. The very next evening Mr. and Mrs. Archer drove to a farm house a mile away, where they had merely made a formal call before, and spent a good share of the evening, becoming better acquainted with their neighbors. From one topic to another it was easy to introduce books and reading, also to sound these people on the subject. And they found them intelligent, and quite well read in a general way, and found here also there was a latent desire for more reading matter than fell to their lot, and more than they thought they could afford to supply their family. Then Mrs. Archer adroitly introduced their club plan, while Mr. Archer went on to explain that if they could get, say half a dozen of the neighbors to pay not more than two dollars apiece as a beginning, they could secure several first-class periodicals to pass from one family to another to read.

"And when we once begin," said Mrs. Archer, "I presume there are others of our most distant neighbors who may become interested and like to join the enterprise, and thus in time enlarge our scope and add to our privileges. And we can have perhaps a new book now and then to circulate, and, may be, may exchange some of those we already have in our homes."

The evening here passed so pleasantly and socially that Mrs. Archer began to feel, for the first time, that she might make congenial friends even in a new community, and that the opportunities which she had always had for society and culture might be made a pleasure and a benefit to others.

Another evening Mr. and Mrs. Archer spent at Mr. Downs, taking Alice with them to visit Emma, as here too, only a call had previously been made. And when the subject of books, and finally of the club was introduced, Emma was almost beside herself with pleasurable excitement.

"Oh, papa," she said almost forgetting there were visitors present, "we will help, will we not? and get others to join the club. For you cannot imagine how hungry I am for more reading; for more of real literature than I have ever been able to command. For you see," said she turning to Mrs. Archer, "we cannot buy all we would like, and our friends have few of the most desirable works, so they are beyond our reach."

"Why, I didn't know the child cared so much about books before," said her father, "and now we will do what we can to help along your plan. The expense is little if we can only interest others with us."

And so the matter moved on. Not all the neighbors were ready at first to endorse the scheme, but in a short time a sufficient number had become interested to make the promise of beginning a sure thing. Mr. Archer put his individual magazine into the club, which was more of a tax than any others paid towards it, and thus about five periodicals, two of them more especially for the little folks, were secured for the first year. This was perhaps enough literature of the kind besides the general newspaper which comes into all fairly intelligent families in our land. And this variety, this new source of pleasure and instruction, how it became prized by all concerned. There were no set rules at first for the club, but an understood arrangement which gave each family equal rights as to reading the publications. One thing, no one was to keep a new magazine more than a week (or ten days if the return could not be made on the regular day) and one neighbor was to pass to the next nearest, and so to the end. Afterwards a second reading could be had by applying to head-quarters, and often the second time would give the best chance to read the more weighty articles. Then in the busy summer if the reading got behind-hand, there was the better accumulation for the long winter evenings and stormy days in-doors.

From reading magazine articles, historical or otherwise, some of the more scholarly among the young people, began to want more books on history, biography, science, and works of writers named of which they scarce knew before, and thus by degrees quite a little book club was also formed. Mr. Archer had catalogues, or showed advertisements where to send for them, of desirable works in all branches of literature, and of some houses where books were sold so cheap that a single dollar, wisely expended, would give a vast deal of useful and entertaining reading.

"To think," said he, "of books so cheap now; books which I would have made almost any sacrifice to have obtained had prices then been within my boyhood's means. To think of being able to get almost any one of Shakespeare's plays for three cents; to get standard poets for half a dollar, or even less; to have Macaulay's fascinating essays; with others of the English essayists, for a mere song; valuable histories for as low as fifteen cents a volume, and other standard works at equally low prices. Of course these prices do not cover the best editions, but even books in paper covers, if of fair print, are not to be despised. And standard fiction also comes in with the rest."

Dating from the book club, the Archers became more interested in their neighbors, and their neighbors more truly appreciated the worth and culture of the family recently come among them. And this led to other ways and means of entertainment, so that the young people became much more at home in the country than they once thought possible for them to be.—*Household.*

"EXCEPT JOE WHITBREAD."

A lady in Dorsetshire, England, went to the home of a sick man, Joe Whitbread by name. She found him very ill, being, in fact, doubled up with pain before the fire.

After speaking with him for a few minutes concerning his health, she turned the conversation to his state before God. He unhesitatingly declared that in that respect he was all right, as he had never injured any one in his life, and was not a bit afraid to die, altogether evincing his state to be one of stubborn self-righteousness.

Having heard all he had to say without making much answer, she proposed to read to him a little from the Word of God. He made no objection, and she accordingly opened her Bible at Romans iii. 9, reading it as follows, very slowly, and with much emphasis upon the words in italics:

"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin"—*except Joe Whitbread.*

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one"—*except Joe Whitbread.*

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God"—*except Joe Whitbread.*

"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"—*except Joe Whitbread.*

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God"—*except Joe Whitbread.*

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight"—*except Joe Whitbread.*

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference"—*except Joe Whitbread.*

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"—*except Joe Whitbread.*

When she came to the last of these verses, he cried out in great distress, "Oh, stop, ma'am! I can't bear it any more! Oh, stop, stop, ma'am!"

She, affecting surprise, asked what was the matter, remarking, "I'm only putting together what God says and what you say. God says, 'All have sinned,' and you say you have not; so that must be 'except Joe Whitbread.'" Only a few more words passed, and she left.

The next time she saw him, the moment she appeared in his room his face brightened up with joy and gladness, and he exclaimed how delighted he was to see her, having been longing for her to come. He then related what agonies of soul he had gone through since her first interview with him, so much so that a report began to spread in the village that he had lost his reason; but the Lord had revealed himself to him, and it was all now perfect, cloudless peace, and he was longing to depart and to be with Christ.

They accordingly rejoiced and praised together for the wondrous grace that had rescued him from the self-righteousness in which Satan had held his prey. A few days afterward he fell asleep, having been full of joy from the moment he found peace to that in which his spirit passed into the presence of him whose precious, perfect work had made him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Dear reader, are you self-righteous? God's Word says, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Romans iii. 12.)—*English Paper.*

TELLING JESUS.

"Told Him all things."—Mark vi. 30.

When you have been out for a day, what do you look forward to as you come home in the evening? Why do you run so eagerly into the house and look so bright? You want to tell "all about it" to some one whom you love—father, or mother, brothers or sisters: and you can hardly talk fast enough to pour it all out. You begin at the beginning, and tell everything (if they will only let you stay up long enough) the pleasure and the mishaps, what has been done, or what has been said.

When each day is over and you go to bed, what do you tell Jesus? Do you tell Him everything too? Perhaps you do not tell Him anything at all; or, perhaps, you only tell Him of something that you have done wrong and are sorry for; you never thought of such a thing as telling Him everything! Yet he loves you better than the dear ones down stairs who listened to all your little stories.

When the apostles had been away, they "gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught." Can you not fancy the gentle, gracious Master listening to everything so kindly, so patiently, letting them tell Him all their mistakes and all their success, all that had made them glad and all that had made them sorry? And can you not fancy the disciples sitting at His feet and looking up into His face, and seeing how interested He was in all they had done, and not wishing to keep anything back from such a dear Master, and finding their own love to Him growing warmer and brighter for this sweet hour of talk with Him? How different if they had just said a few cold words to Him and never told Him anything! Try this to-night! It will be such a help, such a comfort, and before long you will find it such a joy to tell Jesus everything:

Tell Him all the failures,
Tell Him all the sins;
He is kindly listening,
Till His child begins.

F. R. H.