



THE WATCHER AT THE GATE.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

It was long ago that the children played
In the quiet field where the daisies grew;
They twined the flowers, and the wreaths they made

Were left all night in the summer dew;
'Oh, wait till the gold has died away,
And a star shines over the old oak tree!'—
But a soft voice answered—'I must not stay,
For mother will watch at the gate for me.'

The years went by, and I played no more
In the daisied grass when the evening fell;
The heart, so light in the days of yore,
Was burdened by griefs I could not tell;
But hope could quicken the weary feet
That toiled through the twilight across the lea;
'I must hasten home,' (oh, the thought was sweet!)

'For mother will watch at the gate for me.'

And now, when the long day's work is done,
I go my way through the street or mart
In the loneliness that is known to One
Who sees the depths of the mourning heart;
But angels come at the close of day,
And sweet is the message they bear to me;
'Thou art near the end of the thorny way,
And thy mother waits at the gate for thee.'

—Sunday Magazine.

SARAL.

BY MRS. JAMES C. PERKINS.

This sweet story was written by Mrs. James C. Perkins, the wife of a missionary in Mandapalai, South India, and is a touching chapter from her own experience. Fifteen dollars a year is all that is needed to rescue such jewels as these from the dust of heathen degradation and superstition. Shall we withhold this small amount?

It was a hot day in Southern India,—hot even on the roads shaded by the wide-spreading banyans, but hotter still on the long stretch of sand that lay between the low line of hills. The only sign of life for miles was a bandy, moving along midway between the hills. Finally it turned off the road, crossed a stream, and entered a grove of coconut trees. Straight and tall, they shot up into the air like pillars, their tufted heads so close together the sun could only penetrate in tiny beams. Here the bandy stopped, and a missionary and his wife climbed down.

'Well, the worst part of the journey is over; it has taken us six hours to travel these twelve miles,' said the gentleman. 'Yes,' answered the lady, with a sigh; 'but we must go back over the same road, and I am so lame and tired I feel as if I should never be able to walk again.'

A servant in the meantime had opened a door in the bottom of the bandy, and had taken from it a large willow food box, two folding chairs, a folding table, and a little oil stove. In a very short time the grove was changed into a dining room, and the lunch was ready.

The repast over, the chairs and table were folded up and put back into the bandy, and they continued their journey; this time past villages, whose pointed

thatched roofs were seen above the low trees.

A servant had been sent before them to set up the tent, and the missionary and his wife were glad to reach their destination.

'Shall you go out to-night?' asked the wife. The husband was silent a moment. He was very tired after the heat and wearisome jolting of the day, but at last he said, 'I am always afraid to delay, for I may lose an opportunity of reaching some soul who may not come another night.'

'Assiarathan better go and arrange the canvas in a place near the temple, it is getting so late.' Most of the work in India is done at night with a sciopticon. After they had finished dinner they started out past the dusky figures crowding round the door of the tent, and down through the town, the crowd following them increasing at every step.

The doors of the houses were filled with beautiful, dark-eyed women, with bright cloths draped gracefully over their shoulders, while ghostly figures completely enveloped in white lay stretched out asleep on the ground.

When the missionary and his wife reached the temple the white canvas was in its place, and near it the baby organ. The lady sat down and began to play and sing one of the native airs. The people drew nearer; when suddenly on the great white sheet appeared two bright figures, representing Jesus at the well and the woman of Samaria. The women now began to approach, and whisper, and point. The missionary then told them the story in a few simple words. The picture suddenly disappeared, and another took its place. The same kind face, with the sick, lame, and blind gathered around him. Again the missionary spoke, and said, 'He loved the people so deeply that he cured their diseases; even lepers were made clean.' At this point a man on the outside of the crowd, with the fatal white spots, drew nearer. 'Where is he now?' he asked, eagerly. The picture of the crucifixion appeared, and the missionary continued, 'His own people hated him, and stoned him, and finally nailed him to a cross; but he rose from the dead, and is now with his Father in heaven, waiting for those who love him and believe in him.' Then he showed them Christ raising Jairus' daughter and told them Jesus loved the little girls as much as he did the boys, and brought this one to life again; and many a mother, whose heart still ached for the little daughter who had been so unwelcome at first and had passed away unnoticed, shed tears.

All this time the lady had been watching a child, with large, earnest eyes, standing near her, listening intently to all that was said, and who had crept nearer and nearer, and at last stood beside the organ. When the gentleman had finished speaking she said to the little girl, 'Would you not like to come to my school?' Saral opened her eyes wide at this. Her idea of school was a noisy place on a porch, where the teacher spent most of his time talking to the passers-by. But what must it be to go to school to this lady with the kind face! Still, Saral was too shy to say anything, so the lady turned to a man who had joined them and said he was her father.

'Will you let your little girl come to my school?' she asked.

'She doesn't need to learn,' he replied. 'Girls do not need reading to make them good wives, and she is married already.'

'But we teach them other things, besides,' said the missionary. 'See this,' and she took from her satchel a butterfly pricked on cardboard, and sewed on with bright colors; 'a little girl no larger than yours made this.'

The man began to look interested. How his neighbors would envy him the possession of a picture like that! Then he said,

'But I have so many children, and no money to send a girl to school.'

'I have some money,' said the lady, eagerly, 'that a band of girls at home sent me to support some one with, and I will pay for your daughter with it.'

'But we do not belong in this town, answered the man, 'and we go back to our little village to-morrow; and how can she get to your school?'

'Some one may be coming that way in January, and they could bring her,' the lady suggested.

The months had passed away, and the lady had almost forgotten her weary journey to the town among the mountains, when one day in January a man, followed by a little girl, came up the veranda, and she remembered at once the large, earnest eyes and the pretty, dark face. 'I was coming this way,' said the man, 'and Saral's father asked me to bring her to the mission school.'

What a new life opened out to the child so used to the wickedness of a heathen village. The prayers in the morning, the hours with her books in the clean, white-washed schoolroom, and the afternoons in the veranda of the cool bungalow, when they sewed together the bright-colored patchwork sent to them by the mission band who were paying for her! Then there was Sunday. Saral had never known a day like Sunday, when all work was put away, and they were dressed in little jackets and clean white clothes and taken to church, where they heard such beautiful stories.

Saral told dreadful lies at first, but after each one the lady took her into her own room and talked to her, and taught her how to pray to her Father in heaven, who would help her overcome her faults; and soon she became one of the most conscientious girls in school. At the end of the term she returned home with a little quilt made of the patchwork she had stitched together, and some pretty pictures sewed on the pricked cards.

When it was time to return to school there was no one to take her, and Saral cried much over it. At last the old grandmother said, 'I will take her.' She had been watching her little granddaughter for days. When Saral took her rice and curry the grandmother saw her bow her head. 'Why do you do so?' she asked. 'I am asking God to bless my food; they do so at our school?' replied Saral. At night Saral was seen on her knees, and again she was asked, 'Why do you do so?' 'I am asking God to take care of me while I sleep,' she said. The old grandmother thought over all these things. She said how Saral helped to clean the brass vessels without grumbling, and how she played with the baby brother when he was cross, and she said to herself, 'That is a good place, that school. I will take her.' So they started off on their long journey, part of the way riding in a cart, and sometimes walking, while they spent the nights in the rest houses along the road. When they reached the mission school the grandmother stayed a few days. She saw the girls at work and heard them sing. Then she went back to her village, and thought over all she had seen. Saral had been at school one year, and it was again vacation. The lady called her to her room and said, 'You must think of this verse when you are away; "I have called thee by thy name." Though there are so many people in your village, still he knows you, and calls you by your own name, just as I call my little girls, and he says, "Thou art mine." Saral went home.

The vacation was over and the veranda was once more filled with busy little needle women, but Saral had not come. 'She is waiting for some one to bring her,' thought the lady. But not long after this she saw Saral's grandmother walking slowly up the road; she came upon the veranda and threw herself down before the missionary's wife, sobbing bitterly. At last she said, 'Saral is dead; it was the cholera. She was well in the morning, and at night she was dead. She told me to tell you he called her by name, and she had gone to him. And now,' said the old woman, rising, 'I want you to tell me about him—why Saral was so good and patient, and why she was so glad to go to him.' Deeply affected, they told her.

In a few months the grandmother went home, but she went back a Bible-woman. The year after, the missionary and his wife

again travelled over the stretch of heavy sand between the low line of hills to the village where Saral died, and in the midst of all the wickedness and idolatry they found a little band ready to give up their heathen rites and follow Christ. When they returned to their tent at night, the lady said to her husband, 'Do you remember the time you showed the pictures when we first saw Saral?' 'Yes.' 'Do you remember what you said to me when I asked if you were going to hold your meeting just after we arrived?' 'No, I do not.' 'You said you always feared to lose an opportunity, lest you might miss some one you could not reach again. Had we remained at home that evening we would have missed Saral, for she left the town next day with her father, and we would never have seen her, nor her grandmother, and perhaps it would have been years before we could have gotten any hold upon this people.' And the minister answered softly, 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they shall be alike good.'—Life and Light.

LISTENING TO THE SCRIPTURES.

Even good and conscientious people are sometimes surprised to find that they have been hearing the scriptures read without really taking in a word. Among children it is perhaps the exception to find attentive listeners to any sort of religious exercises.

The shrewd principal of a large school once inquired at the close of the morning devotional services if any pupil present could tell what chapter had just been read, or anything which it contained. Not one responded, though the most perfect quiet and order had been maintained throughout all the exercises. On the following morning, three or four could remember, having been warned by the experience of the previous day. In the course of a few weeks, the inquiries having been judiciously repeated from time to time, nearly every one of the pupils could tell something of what had been read, and a proper habit was gradually substituted for the irreverent and mentally dangerous one of inattention which had prevailed before.

It will be found a good plan for parents to make a practice of asking their children, after church, something of the Scripture that has been read, the sermon and the hymns which have been sung. A general conversation upon the subject, not critical nor flippant, forms the best occasion for instituting these inquiries, which need not be, indeed would much better not be, direct. It is an unpleasant thought that we ever listen, or that our children can listen, to the sacred words of the Book which we prize most on earth without comprehending their meaning or even remembering what they were. There must be something wrong if this state of things is allowed to continue.

It will be found greatly to stimulate the interest of the whole family in the morning Scripture reading if brief comments and explanations are judiciously made from time to time by the older members of the family. It goes without saying that reading in turn by all is more likely to maintain interest than the reading of the whole lesson by any one, while the time consumed in the two methods will not, if the children have been properly trained, differ materially. Everybody enjoys most those exercises in which he has some part himself, unless he is hopelessly lazy or diffident, or has paid for his entertainment. In any case, care should be taken to see that no member of our own families habitually listens to the reading of anything, especially the Bible, without paying strict attention to it. The habit of mind is, as has been said, an injurious one intellectually, and it involves, besides, the moral obliquity of only half doing a thing, a blemish which must in time, unless counteracted, inevitably affect the whole moral character.—The Congregationalist.

FORBEAR.

The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear;
And something every day they live,
To pity, and, perhaps, forgive.

—COOPER.