



The Family Circle.

LIGHT BEYOND.

Beyond the stars that shine in golden glory
Beyond the calm, sweet moon,
Up the bright ladder saints have trod before
thee,
Soul! thou shalt venture soon.
Secure with Him who sees thy heart-sick
yearning,
Safe in His arms of love,
Thou shalt exchange the midnight for the
morning,
And thy fair home above.

O, it is sweet to watch the world's night
wearing,
The Sabbath morn come on,
And sweet it were the vineyard labor shar-
ing—
Sweeter the labor done.
All finished! all the conflict and the sorrow,
Earth's dream of anguish o'er;
Deathless there dawns for thee a nightless
morrow
On Eden's blissful shore.

Patience! then, patience! soon the pang of
dying
Shall all forgotten be,
And thou, through rolling spheres rejoicing,
flying
Beyond the waveless sea,
Shalt know hereafter where thy Lord doth
lead thee,
His darkest dealings trace;
And by those fountains where His love will
feed thee,
Behold him face to face!
—Selected.

AMY'S PROBATION.

By the Author of "Glaucia," &c.

CHAPTER VII.—SISTER MAGDALEN.

Amy knew that the letter she had written would be returned to her. Ursula had read it, and she had resolved to destroy it and write another, a shorter and more guardedly worded epistle, that might pass the scrutiny of the nuns, and yet arouse her mother's anxious fears. Milly, however, decided to seal her letter in pretended ignorance of the rule, and send it as it was.

So the two letters were placed in the box at the school-room door, and Amy waited with some anxiety until the next day, almost fearing each time she saw the nun that she would be told her letter could not be sent. But the next day passed, and the next, and nothing had been said, and Milly grew quite jubilant over the success of her bold step. "We shall have papa here as fast as he can travel, now," she contrived to whisper to Amy a day or two later.

"How soon can he reach us? before Sunday?" asked Amy.

"Milly shook her head. "Monday or Tuesday," she said.

"Then mamma will be here first, I should think. I hope it will be before Sunday," and Amy sighed, for Sunday had grown to be a dread to her, with its weary waiting outside the chapel door.

For the rest of that week Amy gave but a divided attention to her lessons, for each moment she expected to be summoned to the Superior's parlor to meet her mother. But the days passed on without any break in the usual routine, and Sunday came again; and this time Amy was the only one left waiting in the corridor.

As Milly passed her on her way into the chapel she contrived to whisper, "Come in just to hear the singing."

But Amy shook her head. She could not speak; her heart was too full of sorrowful disappointments to see her sister and cousin, and so many of the other girls whom she knew to be Protestants, going into chapel. She stood against the wall as she had done the Sunday before, trying to lift her heart in prayer to God. If only she might have been alone it would have been an intense relief to be able to kneel down and pour out her trouble to her Father in heaven; but the lay sister in charge kept strict watch and

ward, even objecting to Amy leaning against the wall, saying it was against the rule, which ordered that all standing there by their own choice should stand upright and not move. To stand upright, without moving, for two hours, was almost a physical impossibility; but the sister was so vexed by being kept in the corridor by one obstinate girl that she insisted Amy had behaved very badly, and reported her to the Spiritual Mother. This punishment was often threatened, but seldom carried into execution, except in very flagrant cases, so that Amy felt the disgrace the more keenly, undeserved as it was. But whatever her feelings of disgrace might be, the punishment decreed seemed greater than she could bear. The nun declined to see Amy that day, but sent word by the lay sister that she should not be allowed the usual privilege of talking to her sister and cousin. Whether this was designed to prevent Amy saying anything against their going to chapel, as she had done before, or whether it was the most fitting punishment that could be thought of, may be an open question; but the authorities certainly took the most effectual means of preventing any check being given to Milly and Florie.

Poor Florie certainly seemed greatly distressed, and Milly indignant, because Amy was not allowed to walk with them; but Milly comforted herself and her cousin by saying they had a lucky escape from a long lecture, and they laughed and chatted and criticised the nuns, and the singing, beautiful as it was, but forgot to say a word about their letters. Milly had almost forgotten the matter now. Her father could not reach them until Monday or Tuesday, but he was certain to come then. She had quite made up her mind upon this point, and, beyond saying they should be at home by the next Sunday, Milly said not a word of her expectation.

The long, dreary day came to an end at last, and Amy, feeling almost sick at heart, began to count the hours to Tuesday, thinking she would not expect her uncle until the latest moment, and then if he should come before, the surprise would be all the more pleasant and welcome.

But Monday passed, and Tuesday, and on Wednesday Milly had grown so manifestly restless and uneasy that she was several times reproved for her inattention at lessons. Amy contrived to look at Ursula, but Milly only shook her head in a disconsolate fashion.

Thursday morning, however, brought a letter to Florie. It was handed to her open, but she had been prepared for this, and so made no complaint. When she had read it, she asked if it might be passed to her sister, as it was from her mamma.

Amy started in blank amazement when she read the opening words: "Why does not Amy write to me; she cannot, surely, be so busy as not to find time for a word to send her mother?"

Poor Amy was startled out of all remembrance of rules as she read these words, and, rising from her seat with the open letter in her hand and her eyes full of tears, she said to the nun who had charge of the class, "May I go to Sister Ursula?"

"Not now," said the nun, calmly motioning for her to sit down again.

"But—but it is about a letter my mother ought to have had a week ago," said Amy, not able to choke back her rising sobs.

"The business of the school cannot be interrupted for this," said the nun, coldly.

"But my mother—"

"Will you sit down, or do you desire to be reported to the Spiritual Mother again?" asked the teacher, sternly.

Amy sat down, feeling almost bewildered with this fresh trouble; for she could see from the whole tone of the letter that her mother thought her neglectful and unkind, and certainly could not have received her letter, sent at the same time as Florie's.

Recreation time came at last, and again she asked if she might see Sister Ursula about her letter; but she was told that the Spiritual Mother was the person to refer to, and she could not be seen until the evening. So she had to wait with what patience she could muster; but meanwhile she contrived to tell Milly that she feared neither of their letters had been sent, and it was, therefore, useless to expect their father to fetch them this week.

Milly looked dismayed when she heard it. "Not been sent?" she repeated; "but Sister Ursula would have told us if they had not been suitable."

"Well, I am going to ask about mine this evening—we have to see the Spiritual Mother about it."

Milly made a wry face at the very mention of her name. "She is an old cat, I know; but I'll brave her and go with you; they shan't destroy my letters without hearing of it."

That afternoon, while Milly was in the music room, Augusta Crane came in to help Sister Magdalen with some of the pupils, and Milly, forgetting all rules regarding their talking to the novices, at once began, "O Augusta how could you be so wicked and deceitful as to bring you to this place when you knew we should be miserable?"

"Hush, hush, dear child; you are not miserable," said Sister Magdalen; and Augusta, knowing something of Milly's impetuous temper, went and closed the door that no one else might hear what passed. Only Amy was present besides themselves, and so it might be hoped that Milly's outburst of anger would not be heard of by the authorities. She seemed glad to see Milly, too, and, in spite of her angry looks, went and kissed her.

"How can you kiss me, Miss Crane? If you cared for me one bit you would not have brought me to this horrid place where you knew I should never be allowed to see you."

"But you may see me, Milly dear, as much as you like—at least by and by."

"How?" asked Milly.

"By learning the holy devotion that will make you sincerely desire a more strict rule and greater mortification of the flesh."

"You want me to become a novice?" demanded Milly, with a fresh accession of anger.

"My dear, no one is forced to become a novice or a nun," interposed Sister Magdalen. "I took the vows because—because I could follow my beloved music, and devote all the talent God had given me to his service, safe from the snares and temptations of the world."

"Well, I like the snares and temptations of my own home," said Milly, perversely; "and I like to tell the truth in a straightforward fashion, and not deceive people. I don't call that 'holy devotion,'" she added, darting a look at Augusta, "as about the rules; but—but something happened after a little while, and then I learned something of the true obedience, and how blessed it was to give up my own pride, and live for God."

"My dear child, if you only knew how greatly God has favored your friend—honoring her even above all the holy sisters of this house, before she began to care for him, you would not wonder that she has decided to embrace the religious life, that she may gain even more distinguished favors, both for herself and others, said Sister Magdalen.

"I know she deceived mamma about this place," said Milly, sullenly.

"Milly dear, don't use such a harsh word as that," said Augusta. "Do you not think that, having tasted the sweetness of devotion and true obedience myself, I should be anxious that my friends should know something of the same blessedness?"

"But why did you not tell your mother all about it? She does not know that you are a novice, and I don't think any obedience can be true and right that teaches girls to deceive their friends like that. How could you do it, Augusta?" she added, reproachfully.

The tears came to Augusta's eyes as she looked down into Milly's angry face. "Ah, Milly!" she said, with a sigh; "you do not know how hard it was not to tell her everything—everything from the very beginning."

"Well, why didn't you then?" said Milly, in a kinder tone.

"It was laid upon me as a test of my obedience not to do it. I thought if dear mamma could only know how highly God had honored me, and saved her and papa through the prayers of the sisters, she would certainly become religious, too; but the Superior bade me lay down my own judgment in this matter at the feet of God—he would accept the sacrifice, and the merit I should gain would be as great as though all my friends had been saved through me. It would be a test—a needful test of my humility and obedience, to say nothing of what had happened until I had passed a year of my novitiate; but she said if I could bring

some friends back with me, without disclosing my own change of faith, it would be acceptable as a good work performed under great difficulties."

"Then I am sacrificed to add to your store of good works," said Milly.

"My dear child, if you only knew your friend as we know her in the convent you would understand that she has already so large a store of good works laid up in heaven that there was little need to add to them," said Sister Magdalen; "she is already almost a saint," added the nun, with something of a touch of envy in her tone.

"And are you a saint too, Sister Magdalen?" asked Milly.

"Me? O, no! I love my music too well. There is so little of sacrifice in my life, for some one must teach the music, but it is no trouble, no cross to me, when all try to learn, and so there is no room for saintliness."

"Shall we be cross and obstinate for you?" asked Milly.

"It would grieve me, that would—not for myself, but for you, because you could not learn well if you were cross, and some who are here have great musical talent."

"Have I?" asked Milly.

"Of course you have," answered Augusta, before Sister Magdalen could speak; "and you ought to make the most of your time here, to cultivate your taste and talent. If you will not learn the obedience we are anxious to teach, you ought to profit by the facilities there are for learning to appreciate the best music."

"Well, I certainly will do that," said Milly; "at least, until papa comes to fetch me home. Do you know I don't mean to stop here?"

"I have heard something about it," said Augusta, indifferently. "If you should go back before the year is over I hope you will not say any thing to mamma about me."

"I won't promise," said Milly; "you know I have no wish to learn the obedience you are in love with; I like my own way better," she added.

The music lesson had suffered somewhat by this interruption, and so Sister Magdalen proposed that they should come to her room during recreation hour, but she was anxious to make enquiries about her letter, and reminded Milly that they were going to the Spiritual Mother's room.

"O, I must go another time, unless you will ask about my letter. You might do that Amy; you know all about it."

Amy readily promised to do this, and so when Milly went for her extra music lesson she made her way to the room where the Spiritual Mother sat to receive the visits of the scholars.

She went along with some trepidation, dreading the encounter, and remembering she had already incurred the disgrace of being reported to this authority, and wondering whether this would influence the matter in hand.

But her fears entirely vanished when she opened the door and saw the little old nun who sat at the table. She had a merry little face, and eyes that twinkled like a squirrel's, and Amy caught herself wondering how she had ever become a nun, while she was timidly asking about her letter. The little nun actually laughed when Amy told her that her mother was hurt and anxious at not receiving a letter from her as well as from Florie.

"Very unreasonable of your mother, my dear; but mothers are like hens, you know, and keep up a constant clucking if one of their brood gets away for half an hour."

The simile was so apt as regarded her own mamma, and coming so unexpectedly, Amy laughed too; but she said the next minute, "I do not want to make mamma anxious, and so will you please tell me about my letter."

"And what do you want to know about it my child? It is quite safe, if that is what you mean."

"You did not destroy it, then?" said Amy, thinking it had been sent after all—that there was merely some delay in dispatching it.

"Destroy it? O dear, no! we never destroy such important documents as young ladies' letters. Here it is," she added holding up the letter, which she had just taken out of a pigeon-hole at the side.

"Then—then it was not suitable?" faltered