

## The Family Circle.

### THE EMPIRE OF THE SEA.

Our fathers, had they not been men  
Of iron hand and tempered core,  
Had surely pined and perished, when  
Fate set them on a storm-girt shore,  
And shut them up, 'twixt sea and sky,  
To win their liberty or die.

But from the ocean mist there came  
A busy hum that roused the earth,  
The din of anvils, and the flame  
Of breathing forges, and the mirth  
Of labor done: and word went forth,  
"A giant lodges in the North."

When they had tilled the sulky land  
Until a garden blossomed there,  
They felt the trammels of the strand,  
And, restless save in free-est air,  
They tamed the sea with cunning toil  
As they had tamed the stubborn soil.

And when the sea was surely won,  
They only halted where the waves  
Receive the gold of setting sun  
Or wash pink pearls from orient caves;  
And gold and pearls and much beside  
Our fathers garnered from the tide.

The sea was theirs, but theirs to keep,  
With hands that never shrink from blows  
And eyes that never closed in sleep,  
Against a world of jealous foes,  
They kept it proudly. And to-day  
'Tis ours to keep or fling away.

Shall those who, weak and scarcely free,  
Won the dominion of the sea,  
A more contracted lordship crave.  
When round the world no wandering wave  
Can live its life and yet not feel  
The pressure of a British keel?

Shall we, whose sires in this cold isle,  
Dreamed to be great and watched the while,  
Who planned and spent, who fought and won,  
See their unequalled task undone,  
When now—so well they worked and willed—  
Their boldest dreams are all fulfilled?

Or shall we stand, as long they stood,  
Strong children of undaunted brood,  
And bid the nations learn once more  
That their dominion is the shore,  
And that, till Britain fails to be,  
She keeps the Empire of the sea?

—W. Laird Clowes, in *Pall Mall Gazette*.

### MY CRAFTY NEIGHBOR.

'You must have your new neighbors to dine, my dear,' said Stephen. 'How would Thursday do?'

I had always made a point of responding cordially to any such proposal from my husband. He worked hard for his family, and provided liberally. I thought it was as little as he had a right to expect that he should be free to throw open his door, at any time of the day or night, to whatever guests he might choose to invite. And ten years' trial of this plan had assured me that Stephen had more pleasure and satisfaction in our simple village home, than many others who own palaces and villas and yachts galore. But I did not enjoy the prospect of having our new neighbors, the Seldons. They were people of good family and comfortable circumstances, past middle life, who had spent twenty or thirty years in the organized work of some charitable association in the city. The husband's health had broken down, and they had rented the pretty cottage next to ours, for a year. There was no objection to charitable associations, of course. Dear me, no! Stephen and I contributed regularly to that sort of thing, and got reports by the dozen—which we never read. But you can see for yourself that this is not the kind of people one cares to meet in society. However, I agreed to the Thursday dining, and then wondered who should be asked to meet the new people. They did not attend our church, which was the prominent one in the village, but still, it might not be out of place to ask Dr. Brosins and his wife, and then I would have that pastoral business off my mind, anyhow. I picked out two other couples that I was in debt to, socially, and wrote the cards. They all accepted.

'What about the wines, Steve?' I asked. 'I have heard that these people are cranks on temperance, and I don't know, either, whether it is just the thing to have wine with Dr. Brosins at the table, it might embarrass him.'

'I would not ask people to my house,' answered Stephen, rather haughtily, 'who could be guilty of the rudeness of objecting to my customs; they need not drink wine unless they choose, there will be water, I suppose.'

My table was laid with ten covers, and looked as dainty and stylish as possible. The bowl of scarlet poppies in the center gave the color tone, and no china was used that was not red and white. The name card on each plate had its Shakespeare quotation in red letters, and the initial on the napkins was embroidered in red floss. Although these people were from the city, I flattered myself they would not find my entertainment provincial. As a matter of fact, it was a charming success, but I could not help owing to myself that the charm lay mainly in the new neighbors. They were not in the least stylish, in manner or appearance, but they were altogether delightful, both as talkers and listeners. So far from talking "shop," as I had feared, it was a little hard to draw them out on the subject of their life work, but when once fairly launched the story was so thrillingly interesting that I almost forgot to watch and direct the movement of the dinner, nothing seemed to me to make any difference, except to hear more of the pitiful lives of that "other half," and the inspiring record of how certain brave and lofty souls were trying to help them.

Let me see—what was I going to tell you about this dinner party? Oh, yes, it was a very small thing, but it was the beginning of a great change in my life. When Charles went round with the napkin bottle, both my strangers (and Dr. Brosins, of course,) turned their pretty, wide-lipped glasses down.

'Won't you have your glass filled, Mr. Seldon?' Stephen asked cordially, and I mentally patted him on the back for keeping the slightest shade of insistence out of his voice.

'Not any, thank you,' answered our neighbor, but nobody could have told whether it was because he meant to drink water or sherry. However, when the decanter was pushed across the table, that was declined too. We saw a great deal of the Seldons: Stephen and I found ourselves getting more intimate with them, and really more attached to these two dear old people than we could have thought possible in such a short time.

'One thing constantly surprises me about Mrs. Seldon, Steve,' I said to my husband, 'she never tries to convert me to her way of thinking about things.'

'That's because she has some sense,' Steve answered.

'No, but really,' I insisted, 'if I felt as strongly about anything as I know she does about wine drinking, I could not hold my peace, you know; I would just have to lay hold of people about it, especially my friends and neighbors, and very especially younger people, who might be expected to listen to me.'

'Well, my fierce little woman, I'm thankful then for every week of the two years' difference in our respective ages: for I am constitutionally opposed to being laid hold of by other people's opinions. By the way, where are you going now?'

'Oh, I am going to drive Mrs. Seldon in the dog cart down to see some of the factory people. She is trying to get some of those cruel fathers and mothers to take the little tots of children away from the factory.'

'Hm!' said Stephen meditatively, 'she does lay hold of some people then. Does she address them as cruel fathers and mothers?'

'Oh, you dear old goose! She talks to them in the same sweet friendly way that she talks to me; she doesn't argue a bit, but just asks for these little folks to come to her kindergarten as if she couldn't get along without them, and won't they please do her this favor.'

'Hm!' said Stephen again. 'So it is possible for her to treat people just as she treats you, say, and still think them very

wicked. I wonder what she really thinks of you, this crafty old lady over the way?'

I knew Steve was teasing me, but I didn't half like the suggestion; I had grown too fond of my new neighbor to be willing that she should think hardly of me. The dog-cart and I went about with Mrs. Seldon almost every day for weeks and months. I lost interest in my fancy work and the weekly novel from the library often went back to its shelf unread, while I was growing acquainted with the lives and homes of people who had lived only a few streets away all my life. It was not a very happy or comfortable time for me; the people were so discouraging, so deceitful often, so grasping, so ungrateful, so unreliable, and yet so poor and wretched and ignorant and foolish and self-destroying, that I wished over and over again that I had stayed at home, and had never seen them. Mrs. Seldon never once asked me to do anything for them; she seemed to take it as a great favor that I should go about with her, and she asked my advice constantly, in a way that made me feel ashamed of having no opinions, and no right to any, on the subject. But something laid hold of me, if Mrs. Seldon did not. A great solemn, uncomfortable conviction that I had been up to this time a dastardly shirker in the battle of life, grew up within me, and overshadowed all the pleasant places in which I had been walking. And along with it grew another tormenting conviction, that so far from doing any good to those who needed me, I had been doing harm. I assure you Mrs. Seldon did not once in all those months mention the word "Temperance" to me. I would have remembered it if she had, for the word was disagreeable to me, and always stirred a little secret feeling of antagonism. But, oh, I saw such blight and blast and ruin and suffering follow drink, everywhere, that I began to look at the wine in my glass and Stephen's with suspicion and aversion. It takes a jar sometimes, doesn't it, to form crystals, even when the conditions are all right? My thoughts and feelings were ready to crystallize into resolutions, I think, and then the jar came.

There is one part of my life that I haven't said anything about, because I rarely speak of it to anyone; it lies so deep in my heart that it is hard to tear it up without bringing blood at the roots—or tears—which sometimes mean as much. It is my little grave: the grave of our one little child, a beautiful angel, whom God took away again, after he had been mine for two years. I can not now look into the face of a little fair-haired, blue-eyed child without a passionate tenderness, because of mine. And in all this work of Mrs. Seldon's among our poorer people, it was the very little ones who seemed to fall to my share, and cling to my skirts, and nestle up against me. There was one dear little thing who drew me, especially; a bright, laughing child with that glint on his curls which stirred my most precious memories, and he was called Johnny too; little Johnny Carr. One day Mrs. Seldon sent me a hasty message: would I please drop everything and come for her in the cart, her maid said; something was wrong at the Carr's. I was not long in driving up to her door, but Mrs. Seldon had gone, leaving me word to follow. Who has not felt that heaviness of heart which sometimes foreshadows evil. Mine beat painfully as I urged Gipsy down to the factory cottages, but I was not prepared for the sight of my precious Johnny, white and moaning in his mother's lap. He knew me, and held up his arms. Poor darling, he had nothing but pleasant times associated with me; he thought they would come back in my arms.

It was the old story in that poor woman's life; a husband ordinarily kind, getting roaring drunk, and turning into a wild beast. He had struck her before in these mad fits, but this time he had pushed her down the steep steps, with Johnny in her arms, and the little spine was horribly injured. I felt such a murderous hatred in my heart for

that miserable father, that I am afraid I could have killed him with my own hand at that moment. But when some such fierce word escaped me, the woman turned her poor bruised face to me with a reproachful look: "It ain't as bad in Jack, what tries to help it and can't, as 'tis in them what sells it to him for money. They know what it does to him: I've told them agin and agin; I've promised to give 'em twice as much as Jack pays for drinks, ef they'll jes refuse him. They won't. They eggs him on by settlin' it out before him.'

A great shudder came over me; I shook so I had to put Johnny back into his mother's arms. I felt as if I had helped to do this awful thing, in setting wine on my table day after day. How did I know but that a glass of the beguiling curse drunk at my right hand had proved the spark to inflame some dangerous appetite, to bring some mother and child to misery like this!

Two years have gone by since my red and white dinner party; almost two since my little Johnny was hurt. We hope he is getting well, though the wise city doctor to whom I carried him, could not promise me that he would ever be as strong as other boys. Perhaps you think I never had wine on my table after this; but you forget that it was Stephen's house, and he was master of it. He is very gentle and good to me about it, and though he does not see the matter as I do, he gives up more and more to my piteous suffering at the sight of it. Mrs. Seldon has gone back with her husband to the blessed work of saving other children from such a cruel fate.

'She was undoubtedly a crafty little woman,' said Stephen the other evening, looking half ruefully at his glass of cold tea; 'I never saw her equal.'

'Why, Steve,' I said innocently, 'Mrs. Seldon did not try to influence me, she never said a word—'

'Oh, you little green pea!' said my husband, good-naturedly; 'I don't understand myself what magic she used, but the walls of Jericho did not tumble more effectually to the rams' horns, than your prejudices and customs fell before her guile.'

This was the first time it had occurred to me, reader, that my crafty neighbor had set snares for me!—*The Interior*.

### THE REWARD OF PERSEVERANCE.

A profitable and interesting illustration of the results of perseverance and thrift is shown in the history of the church bell of the North German town of Grosslaswitz.

The townsfolk, after having contributed all that could be spared from their scanty earnings for the bell fund, found the total sum insufficient. About this time, so the story goes, a passing bird dropped a grain of corn in the churchyard from which in due time a stout green blade sprang. As the grain ripened, the village schoolmaster, who had noticed and tended it, plucked it and sowed the seed in his garden. This in season brought forth an increased crop until his strip of garden was turned into a corn field. He then divided the seed grain among the farmers near by, and after eight harvests the faithful townspeople rejoiced in the possession of a beautiful bell which rang out a continual memorial of their industry and perseverance.

In a discussion at a meeting of the Dundee Officebearers' Union, Mr. D. M. Watson said that if the Highland people could be got into intercourse with the United Presbyterians the danger would be that the latter would be thought more orthodox than many of the South-country Free churchmen, and the United Presbyterian Church might be joined on condition that it kept clear of the Free.

The closing lecture of a series on Biblical and social questions was given in School Wynd Church, Dundee, recently, by Rev. A. F. Forrest, Glasgow, whose subject was "The Causes and Cure of Poverty." The other lecturers were Prof. Orr, Dr. Alex. Oliver, and Revs. Charles Jerdan, L.L.B., Greenock, and George Smart, pastor.