

THE HOME CIRCLE.

THY BROTHER'S KEEPER.

Little bare feet on pavement cold;
 Little pinched face, with look so old—
 Daily battle for daily bread—
 Only a crumb, and never a bed;
 Without a mother's tender care;
 Never a lip of a childish prayer;
 Just a thing to be kicked and spurned
 By men in the way of Christ unlearned
 Just a thing for vice to deprave—
 Not a child with a life to save.

And was it not to such as he
 The Saviour whispered, "Come unto me?"
 Is there no soul in riches' wake?
 Nothing to give just for His sake?
 Only the rich at heaven's door?
 Only a hell for neglected poor?
 Is this the teaching of Christ above,
 'Tis a promise of peace and love?
 'Tis but a decree of selfish man—
 From the beginning the devil's plan.

What is one wail, or hundred more?
 Keep your eye on the golden store,
 Drive him to crime and to prison cell.
 But what of the soul you drive to hell?
 Earthly sentence for earthly crimes,
 Sold and bought for dollars and dimes;
 Heavenly judgment for deeds undone,
 A sacred right of every one!
 Are not the wails' crimes charged to thee,
 Who left to ruin, and could not see?

"AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?"

BY HELEN H. BLAKE.

The sun was just dropping behind a huge bank of clouds in the west. Ranch life in winter in any of our Northwestern States involves hardships that few people who have not experienced them ever dream of. Those who have had such trials can sympathize to a great extent with the Pilgrims in their first experience on the inhospitable shores of New England.

"Seems to me, John, I can just see them poor creatures gettin' out o' the boat in that freezin' cold weather, an' nowhere on earth to go—had to build a log hut to live in. I think they were a dreadful brave people."

"Who're you talkin' about, Hannah?"

"I was just thinkin' about the Pilgrims."

"O, them people that settled Massachusetts? P'raps 'twasn't a cold day when they landed. Besides, they came out here to get their own way; lots of people are brave enough for that."

"You're always runnin' people down, John. I'm sure I'd like to know why you came way out here to this forlorn place—it's like the last end of nowhere—unless 'twas to have your own way. And you had a good business in the East, too. Folks might say hard things of you if they tried."

"What's that to me, I'd like to know? I'll go where I can run the business I want to without being meddled with all the time."

"But there's no law in Connecticut 'gainst keepin' a saloon if you keep your license paid up."

"No more there isn't, but I'd rather fight the law than have a dozen o' those women cranks naggin' at me all the time."

"I don't know sometimes but they're right, though, if they are cranky," said the woman a little sullenly. "It don't seem to me, when I think of it, as though we had any right to sell stuff to people that's almost sure death to 'em in the long run."

She ended rather defiantly, like a person who acts from a resolve to do something totally at variance with his whole previous line of conduct, and who feels at the same time a little ashamed to let his change of opinion be known.

Her husband looked at her curiously. She went on with her work without heeding him. Presently he walked across the room and stood before her.

"Grem's to me," he said slowly, "you're changin' your mind rather late; you never used to have no objections to sellin' folks what they wanted." An' I'll jest warn ye that them airs won't do no good. I'm sellin' liquor, an' I'm goin' to do it in spite of any one. Other people an' their chilrun kin take care o' themselves."

"Other people's children, yes; but how about your own. Maybe you'd better be lookin' after yours."

"What d'ye mean by that?" demanded the man fiercely. "I ain't got but one, an' d'ye think Mary Ann 'll take to drink? Not much; she's too much like her old father for that."

His face softened as he spoke of his child. Then he turned away, went out of the door and down towards the barn where some of the stock was housed for the winter.

Far away on the prairie he saw a horseman coming. "Some one for the mail," he said to himself. "But Hannah's in there;

she'll tend to him till I get through." He went on to the barn, thinking of the child of whom he had spoken—Mary Ann—the one thing that he loved. He recalled the time when she had first begun to notice him; when she had first said "Dada;" all the years when he had carried her round in his arms, then let her run after him when he was at work; all through her girlhood when she had been so much to him; up to the time of her marriage, his thoughts travelled. She had been away from home now for two years, and the house had never been the same since. It was true she lived on the next ranch, but that was ten miles away.

"Poor little Mary Ann, poor little gal!" he muttered to himself. "I must go over an' see her to-morrow. Somehow it seemed 'a though she didn't look so happy the last time I was there. If I thought that fellow was usin' her bad, I'd—I'd—yes, I'd kill him sure."

Meantime, the horseman John had seen away in the distance, had arrived, tied his horse, and disappeared in the house. He was in the rough ranch dress, but his voice when he spoke and his manners betrayed the gentleman.

"Good-day, Mrs. Simpson. Isn't it good that winter holds off so long?"

"Yes, sir, it is that," replied Hannah. "I only wish it wouldn't come at all; but that's not to be thought of."

"No, and its coming soon, too. It will be a tough night to night unless I'm mistaken."

"Here's your mail, sir; an' what'll you have to drink?"

"Nothing, thank you," was the grave reply.

The woman reddened as she said:

"I know you don't take anything; I didn't think, I'm so used to askin' that question of everybody that comes in."

"That's all right, Mrs. Simpson. I know you wouldn't tempt me. I don't need the stuff, you see; and as I know I'm better without it, I don't take it."

Hannah said nothing. The man started toward the door, but turned before he reached it and spoke.

"When have you seen your daughter, Mrs. Simpson?"

"I must be goin' on two weeks now, sir, since John was over there, an' I hain't seen her for longer yet. And somehow she don't find time to come here. A married woman's time ain't her own always, you know."

"I saw her as I came by this afternoon, and she looked—" the man hesitated—"rather lonely. Why don't you go and see her oftener?"

"She ain't sick, is she?" asked the mother anxiously.

"She didn't look well," replied the man evasively.

"John an' me'll go over to-morrow or next day," said the mother. "We was goin' then anyway."

"Be sure you do go to-morrow, if possible," said the man earnestly, as he left the house. "She's alone a great deal, you know; her husband has to be away so much."

To himself he said: "I'll stop at 'ee see the girl on my way back, and tell her they are coming; perhaps that will keep her straight until to-morrow." But when he reached the ranch, no one was to be seen. "She's gone already, and taken the baby with her, poor girl! I'd go after her if my wife wasn't looking for me at just such a time. She'd be frightened to death if I didn't get back to-night. I must go home first, anyway." So he took the trail back to his own ranch, while poor Mary Ann was already well on the road to a post-office station fifteen miles away in a direction opposite to her father's house.

"What's that you said, Dan? A woman found dead? Where?"

John Simpson asked the question listlessly.

"Over near Miller's station, 'bout half-way 'tween there an' your gal's house."

"I'm glad it wasn't no nearer here; 'twould have frightened her to death if she knowed it. Mary Ann is an awful skeery little thing! Who found the woman, Dan?"

"That feller that came out here last spring; I've forgot his name; lives 'bout ten miles tother side o' Mary Ann's."

"I know; Robinson, you mean; he was here yesterday. Nice kind of feller, I guess, though I can't never get no money out of him for liquor. He giv' me a lecture w'en he first come out for sellin' liquor, but he hain't never meddled with me since, an' I don't know as I bear him any grudge."

"What did he say ter you?"

"I don't know. He preached a reg'lar sermon took for his text: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' an' at the end he ast me how'd I like to have somebody sellin' liquor to my gal, an' see her drinkin' herself to death. I told him there warn't a grain o' sense in talkin' o' that. My child was all right, and I didn't feel no call to look arter other people's chilrun. They must shift for themselves."