



### The Family Circle.

#### THE FOOL'S PRAYER.

The Royal feast was done; the King  
Sought some new sport to banish care,  
And to his jester cried: "Sir Fool,  
Kneel down and make for us a prayer."

The jester doffed his cap and bells,  
And stood the mocking court before;  
They could not see the bitter smile  
Behind the painted grin he wore.

He bowed his head and bent his knee  
Upon the monarch's silken stool;  
His pleading voice arose: "O Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool!"

"No pity, Lord, could change the heart  
From red with wrong to white as wool:  
The rod must heal the sin; but, Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool!"

"Tis not by guilt the onward sweep  
Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;  
'Tis by our follies that so long  
We hold the earth from Heaven away.

"These clumsy feet, still in the mire,  
Go crushing blossoms without end;  
These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust  
Among the heart-strings of a friend.

"The ill-timed truth we might have kept—  
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?  
The word we had not sense to say—  
Who knows how grandly it had rung?"

"Our faults no tenderness should ask,  
The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;  
But for our blunders—oh! in shame  
Before the eyes of Heaven we fall.

"Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;  
Men crown the knave, and scourge the fool  
That did his will; but, Thou, O Lord,  
Be merciful to me, a fool!"

The room was hushed; in silence rose  
The King, and sought his gardens cool,  
And walked apart, and murmured low  
"Be merciful to me, a fool!"

—E. R. SULL.

#### AUNT RUTH'S PRESCRIPTION.

BY ERNEST GILMORE.

The Dorings had kept a "girl" for general housework, but the family had grown so large and money had become so scarce that they were now doing their own work, even the washing. There was plenty to do, "entirely too much," Elizabeth Doring, the oldest child, could have told you if she had cared to, but that was not her way. She did not complain in words, and yet she might as well have done so, for her face grew very sober and cross and her heart very sore.

If you could have read her thoughts you would have seen something like this: "I think it is too bad, indeed a perfect shame, that we have to work so hard! It's nothing but drudge, drudge, drudge, from morning until night, from one week to another. There's Rachel Morse—she hasn't a single thing to do about the house. There's Rose Thorn goes cantering every single day on horseback and having such a good time. She doesn't have to bother her head over cooking and pots and kettles and all those dirty old things. Now Mary and I don't have one bit of fun; it's work all day around this old house, and wear our eyes out all the evening over the old mending-basket."

You see Elizabeth was in a bad state of mind, and I know that there are a great many who would have said compassionately, "Poor child! I don't wonder she is so despondent; she has enough to make her so."

But Aunt Ruth Stilwell, who came to make a month's visit in the home of her only sister's motherless children, took a different view from this.

"We must make the best of ourselves," she said, "whatever circumstances the Lord has thought best to surround us with."

"Do you think it was the Lord who thought best to take papa's money away?" asked Elizabeth in surprise.

"Certainly," said Aunt Ruth, smiling. "I can't see why it was best, when we all need money so much," complained the young girl.

"No, probably not. We cannot always know God's reason for doing things, but we must trust him, believe him to be our loving Father. Now, my dear, I think the trouble with you is that you are too closely confined at home. I intend to give you a prescription. Go out among the people with some loving service; it would comfort your heart and bring peace to your mind."

"I go out among people with loving service!" exclaimed Elizabeth indignantly. "Why, Aunt Ruth, I can't imagine you are talking to me, for you surely know I have no time to spend in loving service outside of my home, or—" and she hesitated, a flush coming into her cheeks—"even in it; it seems to be a forced service."

"But, my child, you love your father and your sisters and brothers?"

"Yes, indeed, I do, but this everlasting work is so hard. I get so tired, Aunt Ruth, you can't imagine how tired."

"My dear girl!" Aunt Ruth's arm stole around her waist in a tender clasp. "Yes, I can imagine how tired you get, and so you will let me finish giving you my prescription, will you not?"

"Oh, I thought that was all there was—to go out in loving service when I am so tired right here at home. What is the rest?"

"To divide the housework."

"I do; Mary and I do it; she does about half of it—not quite,—for she is younger than I am—and I do the rest."

"But that is not what I mean. I would have you divide the work among you seven children."

"You would not expect that the little ones would do the housework, would you?"

"Yes, their share of it. Let me see, you are seventeen and Mary and Ralph are fifteen."

"You don't suppose Ralph would do housework?"

"Certainly. If there is too much work for the girls and money is too scarce to hire help, he ought to do his share. He would too, if you desired it, I am sure, for he is such a sunny-natured boy."

Elizabeth laughed. In her mind she saw her fun-loving brother Ralph washing dishes and cooking, his shirt-sleeves rolled up over his arms.

"And Isabel is thirteen," continued Aunt Ruth, "and Florence eleven; they could wash and wipe all of the dishes."

"But they go to school," said Elizabeth; "they have to hurry as it is, and they always leave their room topsy-turvy for Mary or me to straighten."

"My dear," Aunt Ruth spoke very gently, "you know that all I say to you is in love, so you will pardon me for saying that you make a great mistake in straightening and picking up after those great girls. Please do not do it any longer. If they arose an hour earlier than they do they would find time not only to leave things orderly but to help with the housework. Try it, my dear girl."

"What would you give Jamie and Sarah to do?" asked Elizabeth with a smile. "Jamie is only seven, you know, and Sarah a little past eight."

"Jamie could sweep the walks and put away his own things at least, and Sarah could do much to relieve you. She could shell peas and set table and brush crumbs and a great many other things."

"Aunt Ruth," exclaimed Elizabeth, rising to her feet as this vision of helpers all about her floated before her, "I'm going to try your prescription!"

The weeks flew by until seven had gone into the past. The fretfulness had all faded out of Elizabeth's comely face, and sunshine had taken possession.

"Going out in loving service among the people, dividing the work among the children," that was the prescription, and this is the way it worked. There was no money for "loving service," but there were other things.

With a basket of sweet flowers on her arm Elizabeth went out for her Master—thus bringing sunshine to her own soul. Sometimes all the fragrant nosegays were left at the Children's Home, sometimes they were carried to the sick and the poor in crowded tenements. Sometimes they were left in the pale hands of some of Elizabeth's dear friends, who were fading out of life. Invariably some lovely message from Elizabeth's lips accompanied them. And in the home Aunt Ruth said it was a sight worth seeing to watch the "Doring Brigade," as she termed the chil-

dren she loved. Ralph did not wash dishes or cook, but his strong arms turned the wringer and filled tubs and did many a good turn before he wended his way to the "Institute." Isabel and Florence washed and wiped the breakfast dishes every morning before school-time—leaving their room in order too. So Elizabeth and Mary went right ahead with other heavier work with a sense of comfort and relief such as they had not known since their mother's death. Jamie and Sarah did their part too before they went to the kindergarten.

Aunt Ruth had gone home long ago, but to their great surprise, she returned again early in September. She found such a wonderful change in the household that she actually cried for joy.

"You darling girls," she said, embracing Elizabeth and Mary, "you deserve promotion, and you are going to have it," and Aunt Ruth took the reins in her own hands. They were sent to school to finish the education that had been so sadly interrupted by the sickness and death of their mother. They knew how to value it as few girls do.—*American Messenger.*

#### DRAWN TOGETHER.

BY ELLA GUERNSEY.

"And now for the quiet afternoon in my own cool snugger! I've earned the treat, as I've swept the house from attic to cellar, and baked bread and cake to last a while. Dear, dear, this August heat is prostrating, and I have to do for six healthy, hungry people. I am so glad to rest. I'll read my magazine," said Mrs. Byrne, an energetic housekeeper who looked well to the ways of her household.

Mrs. Byrne's knack of "turning off work," making things "go" when she took the helm, was the admiration of many women less capable.

Aware of her "talents," Mrs. Byrne was in danger of losing all sympathy for the unfortunate women who must battle with debility, and stagger under burdens too heavy to be borne by weak shoulders.

Sympathetic women when intent upon comforting the sorrowing, or carrying aid into poverty-stricken homes, were learning to avoid calling upon Martha Byrne for a donation.

Mrs. Byrne looked about her pretty room, all in beautiful order. The costly china and silver toilet articles and the polished granite trimmings of the "handsomest bedroom set in town," were a delight to the beauty-loving eye. The couch and easy chairs were inviting, the window blinds lowered just right to exclude the hot sun, and several new periodicals lay upon a table at hand.

"I hope that no one will call. The children are all in the country, and I mean to rest. I've richly earned it. Why can't every woman have a home like mine? There is a great plenty in this world for those who—work for it. Ah! what is going on across the way?" said Mrs. Byrne, peeping through the blinds, then dropping them with a contemptuously uttered, "It's that funeral! I wonder who will go? That little hovel is a disgrace to this part of the town. Mrs. Warder has no energy; from morning until night all she did was to amuse that baby. I think he drinks. Such neighbors are annoying. If there aren't some of the flower mission ladies going into that house a carrying wreath! Such foolishness, and over a baby, too."

Mrs. Byrne took up her magazine and read, "The poor ye have always with you." She looked out again through the "peep-hole," an anguished cry startled her. Again she read—"The poor ye!"

Hastily taking up another magazine the words glimmered and danced before her eyes, "The poor ye have always with you."

A south wind wafted into her ears a wail, "Rachel!" weeping for her child. Mrs. Warder was indeed one of the weak ones, weak in health and in mind, a double appeal for kindly sympathy.

"And you in your pride and strength withhold even the cup of water, or a hand pressure to this stricken mother," said a spirit voice to Mrs. Byrne.

She looked at the marble clock, which had cost fifty dollars. There was yet time to attend that humble funeral, and speedily Mrs. Byrne was in the despatch house.

The father, with white, thin face and the poor mother, both clean and decently attired, sat beside "little Maggie," a pure,

sweet flower lying in a cheap casket. Snowy blossoms beautified the bare room and sympathetic women were "looking after things." A tenderness came into the heart of the "capable woman," entirely new to it. With a sweetness born of human love she sang tenderly:

"For he gathers in his bosom witless, worthless lambs like me,  
An' carries them himself to his ain countrie."

The hour spent by Mrs. Byrne in that miserable little room was a blessed one. The crust of self-esteem and selfishness was melted by the sunbeams of pity and love, and a mantle of charity was begun in the loom of human sympathy which would cover a multitude of the faults she had hitherto mercilessly dragged from their hiding places and exposed to view when people failed to "toe the mark."

In a few days after "little Maggie" was laid to rest, Mrs. Warder came timidly into the cheery kitchen where Mrs. Byrne stood at a table mixing a salad. Awkwardly responding to the pleasant greeting, the poor woman said:—

"I—we—that is, my man, thought that I ought to tell you how thankful we were to you—for—for—singin'—so lovely for—Maggie. You see—she was—so—sweet—an' precious. My man was most crazy—when—she was took—an' said luck was—agin' us, an' no use to try. I knew that meant he'd go to drinkin' ag'in. Miss, he has beat me—when in drink; that's what ails my head. He hurt it an' I've been confused ever since. He said you was scornful, an' didn't think our baby fit to be buried respect'ble. We hadn't a dollar in the house."

"Jack knows better now; you hain't proud, or you wouldn't have sung so sweet about the little one's being carried in his arms. An' the ladies brought sweet flowers. Jack knows now that you do think we have—souls. He is goin' to try to do better, an' I'm wantin' some washin' or ironin'; I can do linen beautiful. Jack an' me are tired, so tired of half starvin', an' we've looked so often at you, settin' in your porch, dressed so nice. We said it wasn't just—that you should have it all an' us nothin'. Jack said you held yourself above us, but we know now that wasn't so, for you cried over little Maggie. You'll tell me how to keep things nicer, for I want the company of my man, since baby's gone. He allus said it wasn't any sort of a home to stay in; an' I might have kept it better. I want to work; teach me how."

"I will. Mr. Byrne will help Jack into something to do. A restful, cleanly home, if it be only one room, is what we may all have, if we use our energy," returned Mrs. Byrne.

From that day the little woman has lent a hand in the blessed work of healing the sick and comforting the mourner.

Many have wondered at the friendship existing between Martha Byrne and weak Mrs. Warder, drawn together by the waxen babyhands of little Maggie.—*Union Signal.*

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#### A BISHOP IN AN EARTHQUAKE.

In the course of a thrilling account of the recent terrible earthquake in Japan which Archdeacon Warren sends by mail, a remarkable incident is mentioned. He was entertaining as guests in his house at Osaka, Japan, on the night before the earthquake Bishop Bickersteth and his wife. The Bishop conducted family prayer before retiring and read the ninety-first Psalm:

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, my God in whom I will trust. He shall cover thee with his pinions, and under his wings shalt thou take refuge," etc. A few hours later the earthquake came and the room in which the Bishop had read these words was an utter wreck. A large chimney crashed through the ceiling, smashing the furniture and filling the place with bricks and timber. Had anyone been in the room at the time, death must have resulted. The room in which the Bishop was when the shock came was in another part of the house. That, too, was overtopped by a high chimney which was thrown down. But it fell in a direction opposite to that of the room in which the Bishop was and injured no one. At family prayer the next morning, the Bishop read the same Psalm with a new feeling of its meaning.