

## The Family Circle.

### THE MISSING ONE. A TRUE STORY.

THE snow fell in a giddy whirl that Christmas Eve, as the pastor sat by his study fire. On his table lay the class books belonging to his Sunday-school teachers. He had asked that he might see them before the annual meeting. With prayerful consideration he glanced over the registers for the year, with the remarks here and there. Against some names he found, "Gone away," "Died," "Ill"; but opposite a name in the senior class of young women he read the word "Missing."

Still holding the book, he closed his eyes, wondering over that word; but, wearied with his day's work, the warm glow of the fire soon drew him into restful forgetfulness of all around him. He seemed to be away where he saw a multitude of people with bright and radiant faces, and the scene was one of perfect gladness. But all at once on his ear there came a voice of earnest pleading.

"Who goes to find the missing one?" And one after another said:

"Send me, Lord. Send me."

He woke. The book was still open, and he read again opposite the name Mary Trentham, "Missing."

"I must go and ask the teacher about this," he said to himself; but first he asked the Lord for guidance, and then prepared to go out into the cold. He was not sure of the nearest way to the teacher's house, and the dizzy light of snow confused him, until he realized he was beyond the turning, and near the river. Waiting to consider, he heard a sound that startled him; and then, again, it sounded clearer, like to one in distress. The prayer had gone up from a heart full of faith, and he did not choose but follow, as the answer seemed to bid him go; and cautiously making his way down the road to the bridge, the moan was distinctly heard, and he could see something lying in the snow.

"Who is it?" faintly asked the crouching form.

"Only a Christian come to help you," he said, putting out a hand to lift what seemed to be a woman.

"Please save me, and lead me away from this horrid water. I am ill and lonely, and I tried it, but it is so dreadful."

"Where shall I take you?"

"I feel so faint, but here—" she said, taking an envelope from her pocket. He got her with difficulty to the lamp, and read, "Mary Trentham," etc. For a moment he, too, seemed numbened, till a thought recalled him, "O ye of little faith!" for had he not actually put himself into God's hands, and asked to be sent. Calling a boy, he asked him to fetch a cab, and conveyed the stranger to her lodging.

"She hasn't been here long," said the landlady. "She's ill and strange. I wondered where she'd gone this wild night."

"Be kind to her, and I will send a friend," he said.

The teacher's house was reached, and Hermine Clure welcomed the pastor; she knew he had come to encourage and inspire her. With peculiar agitation the incident was told and heard, and with tears of gratitude she related how that one had gone to her class for three Sundays past just to please a girl who worked near to her, and then disappeared, and no one could tell how or where, and that during the last two days the word she had written against the name, "missing," had been before her, and almost without

ceasing she had prayed God to find Mary Trentham this Christmas time.

Christmas Day came in upon the town that lay quiet under its covering of snow, and Hermine Clure was early by the bedside of her missing scholar. No festive decoration marked the season, but assuredly in that humble lodging the Christ of God had entered to save a lost soul. All defiance was gone, all rebellion hushed, for earnest prayer had been heard, and what was impossible with the disciples was seen to be possible to the prayer answering God, and Mary Trentham was ready and pining to know of Jesus' love. Weak after a long battling with hidden disease, the cold, and exposure had hastened the end.

"I have no relatives in England, and none who care for me anywhere," she said to her patient listener. "Mother died when I was young, and the friend she left me with died, and I have had a hard life. The world is cold to such as I, and no one told me of Jesus; whatever made me go to your class I can't tell. I hated myself when I saw others happy, but twice when I was ill (for I went right away just then) I did think of what you said."

The pastor and teacher rejoiced together, and one or the other constantly visited and comforted the dying; they felt God had honoured them by entrusting a precious soul to their care. Medical skill was useless, the lonely one had but a short time to live, but out of the bondage of sin she emerged into the clear light of redeeming love, as she laid her weary head on her Saviour and wept to be forgiven.

The last day dawned, the week had been as a year, for the blessedness that new-born soul had experienced, and as the old year died, old things to her had passed away, all things were new. The last visit was a never-to-be-forgotten one to that devoted worker. The bare room seemed lighted as by a torch from heaven; a radiance shone about the pale face as a tear of gratitude trickled down the thin cheek. "How can I ever thank Him for sending his servant out in the cold to save me? Are there no other missing ones like me?"

"Alas! God knows. We will pray; 'tis His to command, and ours to obey!" And after sweet converse and prayer, Hermine felt it was the gate of heaven, and but for the thrilling joy of being used by the Master to save others, she could envy the happy departing soul.

"I am only waiting now till Jesus calls. All is beautifully well," said Mary, her bright countenance proving the truth of her words.

"Is there anything I can do?" asked her friend.

"I want nothing now but Jesus. You have done all you could, but please ask the minister to come once more that I may see the faces of my dearest earthly friends ere I go."

"We will come very soon," said the teacher, taking a fond farewell, and hoping to find the pastor able to go at once.

It was less than an hour when they entered the room.

"Just gone," said the housekeeper, who had attended the dying one. "I came to give her drink, and she said quite brightly, 'Jesus! Jesus!' and was still."

Heaven seemed grandly near, and eternity most real, and to those earnest workers there came a sweet voice, saying:

"He that winneth souls is wise"; and the joy of their Lord entered more fully into their souls as they thanked God for a wanderer brought safely home, and prayed for more Christ-like zeal and love.

Christian workers, there are missing ones