

The Family Circle.

CONTENT IN EVERY STATE.

When I am sick and tired it is God's will :
Also God's will alone is sure and best :—
So in my weariness I find my rest,
And so in poverty I take my fill.
Therefore I see my good in midst of ill,
Therefore in loneliness I build my nest,
And through hot noon pant toward the shady west,
And hope in sickening disappointment still.
So, when the times of restitution come,
The sweet times of refreshing come at last,
My God shall fill my longings to the brim :
Therefore I wait and look and long for Him :
Not wearied, though the work is wearisome,
Nor fainting, though the time be almost past.
—Christina Rossetti.

TO-MORROWS AND TO-MORROWS.

To-morrows and to-morrows stretch a grey
Unbroken line of shore ; but as the sea
Will fret and gnaw the land, and stealthily
Devour it grain by grain, so day by day
Time's restless waters lap the sands away.
Until the shrinking isle of life, where we
Had pitched our tent, wholly engulfed shall be
And swept far out into eternity.
Some morn, some noon, some night—we may not say
Just how, or when, or where ! And then—What then ?
O cry unanswered still by mortal ken !
This only may we know—how far and wide
That precious dust be carried by the tide.
No more is lost, but every grain of sand
Close gathered in our Father's loving hand,
And made to build again—somehow, somewhere—
Another Isle of Life, divinely fair !
—Stuart Sterne, in *Atlantic Monthly*.

ONLY ONE.

"I don't believe I'll go to prayer-meeting to-night."

Mr. Martin said it rather doggedly, as if expecting protest against his decision and fully prepared to meet it.

"Seems to me—I would if 'twas me," said Mrs. Martin, with a little hesitation. "So few go."

"That's just it. So few go that there's no life about the thing. Mr. Dent feels discouraged because it's so, and that makes him dull, I reckon. Everything is dull."

"It's a bad night," said Mrs. Martin.

"Dreadful. Nobody'll be there but those that feel as though they must be."

"Then all the more those ought to go that can," said Mrs. Martin, with a feeble little laugh. "I'd go if I could," she added, with a rueful glance at her sprained foot.

"Of course you would," he said peevishly. "I'll say that for 'em—women'll go when men won't. But that makes it all the duller. Nobody to keep things moving."

Mrs. Martin gave her chair a jerk which turned it so that she could get a view of the deepening shade outside.

"I sometimes wonder," she began, hesitatingly, "why Mr. Dent holds meetings at all such bad nights."

"So do I. He oughtn't to. Ought not to expect folks'll come out. Fact is, I wonder he doesn't give up having prayer-meetings at all."

"Oh John!" she said in a scandalized tone.

"I do," he answered, stoutly. "I don't see any good in such dead affairs, where folks have lost all their interest."

The subject dropped with the summons to tea. Mr. Martin was sober during the meal. His wife hoped it might be owing to the strivings of conscience against his forsaking his "assembling together." But this was not the case. He was really debating with himself the question whether or no to give up prayer meetings altogether.

After tea he settled himself to his newspaper. But he was restless, several

times going for a look out of the window. The February night was raw. A slight fall of snow over a coating of ice, brought by a sharp frost after rain, made the footing precarious.

"Wind's rising," he remarked, "Awful mean night to be out."

"Did you ever wonder, Maria," he resumed, on the occasion of his next journey to the window, "whether there'd ever be a prayer meeting held and nobody come to it—not a single soul?"

"Dear me—no, I never did," said Mrs. Martin, in a depressed tone. "Do you think such a thing ever happened? Wouldn't it be dreadful?"

"Dreadful for who?" said Mr. Martin, with a short laugh. "For the parson or the folks?"

"Well, for both, I guess. Dreadful for the minister, but worse—yes, a good deal worse for the folks who ought to have been there and weren't." Mr. Martin again took up his paper. At the quarter after seven his wife turned her head inquiringly toward him, but he was absorbed in attention to the telegraphic columns, holding his head stiffly in one position.

Half-past seven—five minutes later. The wind howled mournfully about the house.

"Wheat lower. Great storms on the coast. I should say," with a glance towards the window, "that if there's any common sense going to-night, there'll be no prayer meeting. Hear that wind? Who'd think of going out such a night? Well! Well!" half angrily, "it there isn't a light in the lecture-room!"

"I thought Mr. Dent wouldn't give up to it," ventured Mrs. Martin, meekly.

"Some folks don't know when it's the proper time to give up."

Mr. Martin resumed his seat, and read aloud a long account of a burglary in the next town. Neither reader nor listener could have told a word of it after he had finished. Again he strolled to the window.

"Not a track on our side of the street. Slim meeting, I guess," spitefully. Then with a start and a total change of voice: "Maria—I say! That man's got a light in the window."

"What man?" she asked.

"What man!" irritably, "Why, what man should I mean but Parson Dent? Yes, he's set a light in the window."

"Meaning to let folks know he's there," said Mrs. Martin, cheerfully.

"Well, that's a little more'n I can stand."

It would have been difficult for Mr. Martin to tell, if asked, by whom he felt abused as he stalked across the room to a closet containing his overcoat and rubber shoes. But abused he did feel as he opened the door, letting in a blast of cutting wind, and stepped out on the sidewalk.

Through the yielding snow, over the icy foundation, he floundered, and stumbled. There was no trouble now in determining against whom he had a grievance. All three of them were in it—the minister who unreasonably insisted on holding a prayer-meeting on such a night; his wife, who, without really saying so, had conveyed so distinctly her opinion that he was under obligation to go to it; and himself weakly yielding to the combined pressure.

"I'm going to have it distinctly understood after this," he growled to himself, as his feet slipped to the left, giving him a bare chance of saving by a grasp on the

fence at his right, "that I am not one of the men who can be depended upon to be always at prayer meeting."

The outside door was slightly ajar, and being late he entered with noiseless footsteps. At first he heard no sound except the rush of the wind outside and the creaking of the shutters and rattle of the sashes always prevailing in the building during a storm. The silence was surprising, for according to Mr. Martin's calculation it must be near the time for the closing of the minister's usual prayer-meeting talk.

It was at length broked by the sound of a hymn—in the minister's voice. Mr. Dent did not usually "raise the tunes," the duty being taken by one or the other of the women. And as it went on Mr. Martin could hear no other voice.

"Blest be the tie that binds—"

Mr. Martin was spellbound by the peculiar condition of things. There was something weird in the union of the storm without and the stillness within broken only by the solitary voice. It was a quivering voice—for Mr. Dent was rather a weakly man as well as a discouraged one—and just now it seemed to bear a pathetic wail as it thinly rose and mingled with the voice of the wind.

The singing was short. With the words:

"We share each other's woes
Our mutual burdens bear—"

the tremulous voice died away.

A few moments of such intense silence that outside sounds appeared lost in it, and then the sound of prayer arose.

Mr. Martin ventured near the inner door and applied his eye to a crack in the thin panel.

It was as he had already guessed—the minister was alone.

Here was at length, a prayer-meeting to which no one else had come.

The impulse to go quietly in, alternating with reluctance to interrupt, held him a listener—rather an humble, shame-faced sharer in the petition.

He heard the full outpour of the pastor's heart. Heard while the servant of God, alone with his Maker, laid before Him his burdens and trials—his craving, yearning solicitude for the souls committed to his trust.

At first the weakness and the discouragement prevailed—the pain of lack of sympathy, the bitterness belonging with fear of unprofitable service. But across came a more triumphant strain—of unwavering, all-grasping faith in the King who has promised to honor the least of those who serve him with their hearts, a resting on the pledge that seed sown in tears shall not lack its time of fruition, though the fulfilment be long delayed.

"Lord, thou art the hearer of prayer, though it is of one alone." The voice sank lower. "I am only one, Lord, there are not even two to plead before thee—"

"Parson, parson, there are two."

The unguessed participant had opened the door and with swift footsteps was at the minister's side. With streaming eyes the men grasped each other's hands.

The prayer-meeting lasted for some time longer. And from that night dated a quiet but steady growth of interest in the church, based upon prayer-meetings with such improved attendance, through the persevering energy of Brother Martin, as would have awakened gladness and courage in the heart of any parson.—*The Presbyterian*.

WHAT IT MEANS TO RUN AN OCEAN GREYHOUND.

Just as the government of the city of New York is divided among the Mayor, Aldermen, and boards and commissioners of various departments, so the administration of a giant steamship is divided into specialties. The Mayor is the chief officer of the city. The Captain is the chief officer of the ship. He is more than that. From the time she leaves port until she enters port he is master of the life and liberty of every person aboard the ship, as well as of all the property in it. He is an autocrat. Of course he must administer his authority wisely. Unwise autocrats don't last long, whether afloat or ashore.

The head of each department is responsible for all that goes on in it. The first officer is at the head of the crew, or navigating department. The chief engineer directs everything connected with the engines. The chief steward has full control of all that has to do with the comfort of the passengers and crew. Each of these chiefs makes a written report at noon every day. Thus the Captain is kept informed of everything pertaining to the ship's welfare.

Every one of the senior officers of the ship is a duly qualified master, capable of taking her around the world if need be. The day is divided into "watches," or tours of duty, of four hours each. One junior officer is on the bridge with each senior officer on duty. The senior officer directs the ship's course. He never leaves the bridge while he is on watch. Should he do so he would be dismissed at once. There is no excuse possible. It would be just as if he had died suddenly. His friends would all feel sorry, but nothing could be done to help him. Two seamen are always on watch in the bow of the ship, and two more in the foretop. Twice as many are on the look-out in thick weather. Observations are taken every two hours. In the good old sailing-ship days the Captain was content to "take the sun" at noon every day. If the sky was cloudy for a day or two, it really didn't matter much, for he could jog along on dead reckoning. But on an ocean greyhound, rushing over the course between New York and Europe at the rate of more than twenty miles an hour, it is highly important that the ship's position be known all the time. Fog may come down at any moment, observations may not be obtainable for ten or twelve hours. The positions of more than one hundred stars are known. By observing any one of these the ship's whereabouts can be ascertained in a few minutes. Of course the "road" becomes more or less familiar to a man who crosses the ocean along the same route year after year. Yet this familiarity never breeds contempt or any carelessness. No man knows all the influences that affect the currents of the ocean. You may find the current in one place the same forty times in succession; on the forty-first trip it may be entirely changed. Sometimes a big storm that has ended four or five hours before the steamship passes a certain place may have given the surface current a strong set in one direction. There is no means of telling when these influences may have been at work save by taking the ship's position frequently.—*From Harper's Round Table*.

The Church Missionary Society will be 100 years old on April 12th, 1899.