



The Family Circle.

THE CLOSING SCENE.

BY T. BUCHANAN READ.

The following pen picture has been pronounced by the *Westminster Review* to be unquestionably the finest American poem ever written.

Within the sober realms of leafless trees,
The russet year inhaled the dreamy air;
Like some tanned reaper in the hour of ease,
When all the fields are lying brown and bare.

The gray barns looking from their hazy hills,
O'er the dun waters widening in the vales,
Sent down the air of greeting to the mills,
On the dull thunder of alternate flails.

All sights were mellowed and all sounds subdued,
The hills seemed farther and the streams sang low,
As in a dream the distant woodman hewed
His winter log, with many a muffled blow.

The embattled forests, erewhile armed with gold,
Their banners bright with every martial hue,
Now stood like some sad, beaten host of old
Withdrawn in Time's remotest blue.

On sombre wings the vulture tried his flight;
The dove scarce heard his sighing mate's complaint;
And like a star slow drowning in the light,
The village church vane seemed to pale and faint.

The sentinel cock upon the hillside crew—
Crew twice—and all was stiller than before;
Silent, till some replying warder blew
His alien horn, and then was heard no more.

Where rest the jay in the elm's tall crest
Made garrulous trouble round her unfledged young;
And where the oriole hung her swaying nest,
By every light wind like a censer swung.

Where sung the noisy martins of the eaves,
The busy swallows circling ever near,
Foreboding, as the rustic mind believes,
An early harvest and a plenteous year;

Where every bird that walked the vernal feast
Shook the sweet slumber from its wings at morn,
To warn the reaper of the rosy east;
All now was sunless and forlorn.

Alone from out the stubble piped the quail,
And croaked the crow through all the dreary gloom;
A lone pheasant drumming in the vale
Made echo in the distant cottage loom.

There was no bud, no bloom upon the bowers,
The spiders wove their thin shrouds night by night,
The thistle-down, the only ghost of flowers,
Sailed slowly by—passed noiseless out of sight.

Amid this—in this most dreary air,
And where the woodbine shed upon the porch
Its crimson leaves, as if the year stood there,
Firing the floor with its inverted torch;

Amid all this—the centre of the scene,
The white-haired matron, with monotonous tread,
Plied the swift wheel, and with her joyless mien,
Sat like a fate, and watched the dying thread.

She had known sorrow—he had walked with her,
Oft supped and broke with her the ashen crust,
And in the dead leaves still she heard the stir
Of his thick mantle trailing in the dust.

While yet her cheek was bright with summer bloom,
Her country summoned, and she gave her all,
And twice war bowed to her his sable plume;
Re-gave the sword to rest upon the wall.

Re-gave the sword, but not the hand that drew
And struck for liberty the dying blow;
Nor him who, to his sire and country true,
Fell 'mid the ranks of the invading foe.

Long, but not loud, the dropping wheel went on,
Like the low murmur of a hive at noon;
Long, but not loud, the memory of the gone
Breathed through her lips a sad and tremulous tune.

At last the thread was snapped—her head was bowed,
Life dropped the distaff through her hands serene,
And loving neighbors smoothed her careful shroud,
While Death and Winter closed the autumn scene.

If we would bring a holy life to Christ
We must mind our fireside duties as well as
the duties of the sanctuary.—*Spurgeon.*

LOTTIE'S NEW MEMBER.

BY MARY SWEET POTTER.

Lottie Western walked slowly along the village street in the direction of the church one Sunday evening with a very sober look upon her fresh young face. She was going to attend the Young People's Meeting, and it had just occurred to her that it would be unpleasant to meet her pastor, she having failed in performing an especial duty which he had urged upon her at the last meeting. She, together with several others, had each promised to bring in a new member to add his or her name to the list of membership, which was not long, as the society had but lately been organized. But Lottie, being a merry, thoughtless girl, had forgotten until the very last moment all about the matter and found herself on the way to the meeting minus her new member.

Suddenly a sharp whistle cleft the soft, still evening air causing Lottie to cover her ears and glance indignantly around for the source of the discordant sound which so reverently broke the Sabbath stillness. A satisfied chuckle issued from behind a tree near her and a boy with a rowdyish air and an impish smile sprang into view.

Instead of the scolding he expected, Jamie Glen was astonished to see a look of satisfaction spread over Lottie's face and to hear her say in the sweetest of tones, just as if he had not been "the worst boy in the village."

"O Jamie Glen! I'm so glad you happened here just now of all times. I want to talk to you."

It was a special providential arrangement, Lottie believed. Looking at her tiny watch, she saw that it yet lacked twenty minutes of the time for the meeting to begin, and then she opened the fire of her earnest eyes and her voluble, persuasive tongue full upon Jamie Glen, who looked and listened but gave no sign of surrendering.

"But, Jamie, tell me why," begged Lottie, growing nervous.

"I can't, Miss Lottie," replied Jamie, suddenly straightening up and struggling with his obstinate forelock, trying to induce it to stay under his worn cap, as he flushed with pride at being seen in conversation with pretty Lottie Western, whose father was the richest man in D—, by a group of his playmates who were passing by on the opposite side of the road. It was indeed a distinction which Lottie rarely bestowed upon any but her intimate friends. But Lottie had an object in view now, and she had, moreover, a hitherto unconfessed liking for the mischievous dark-eyed boy who was always so audaciously friendly and fearless in his behavior towards her, albeit her station in life was so far above his, who was only Farmer Gray's bound boy.

"Only for one thing, Miss Lottie, I'd go," said Jamie at last, with his face as red as the ribbon on Lottie's hair.

"Only one! Come on, Jamie; I can talk that one little objection away between this and the church. I am sure it isn't worth minding. Tell me what it is quick."

"O Miss Lottie, indeed I can't do it," persisted Jamie. "If it was a month before this time, now, I might have said yes; but now it's too late. I'd just made up my mind to let everything go to the bad, and me with them."

"O Jamie Glen!" cried Lottie in a shocked tone, "you must come with me this minute. There! that's the first bell; come right along. You can tell me some other time."

"But, Miss Lottie, I haven't any right to go in there; I tell you, 't won't do," said the boy, moving slightly in response to Lottie's impelling clasp of his arm and looking seriously in earnest and much pained. But Lottie, too, looked in earnest, and she did not loosen her hold upon him in the least. She seemed to have the impression that his salvation depended upon her own firmness in insisting upon his becoming a member of her beloved society.

"Oh," she thought, "if I had only thought of it during the week! But maybe 't isn't too late yet." And so she gently, but in a manner that admitted no doubt of her own belief in her ultimate success, forced him onward.

"Miss Lottie," he half whispered in her ear, while the deep bell strokes filled the air all around them, "I've stole something. There! now do you think I'm fit to go into that—that place with you and all the rest of them clean ones?"

He stood before her with the flush gone

from his face and a desperate look in his large eyes. He seemed to think that now she must see how impossible it was for him to do anything like that which she wished him to do. But he was mistaken.

"Of course, that was very wicked; but it don't make any difference, only that I want you all the more," replied Lottie calmly. At least she was outwardly calm, but inwardly she was much excited. Her desire to please her pastor by bringing another member into their little society had grown into a fervent desire to save Jamie Glen from going the downward road to ruin, and she felt that if she could win him to join and attend the meetings he might be saved. Lottie had great faith in the power of the work done at the dear little meetings held in the cosy chapel room.

After the dreadful truth was out Jamie made no further resistance, seeing that the avowal did not turn Lottie from him in disgust. They walked on the short remaining distance in utter silence and entered the church together. Lottie would not allow her charge to stop at the back seat where certain mischievous boys were in the habit of congregating, but led him on to the seat which had come to be regarded as her especial property, and here she seated him triumphantly and herself beside him.

Jamie fully appreciated the honor of his position, so fully, indeed, that he felt very uncomfortable, knowing intuitively that every eye was upon him. To add to his discomfort, it all at once occurred to him that he had been ranging the fields and woods all day in his every-day clothes and that he still had them on. Mentally he vowed never to be careless about his appearance on Sunday again.

He was heartily ashamed of himself as he appeared in contrast to the others under the brilliant light of the glittering lamps, and a pride and self-respect which had been sleeping were awakened never to sleep again.

The earnest pastor arose after the opening services and addressed the young people briefly. His face beamed with pleasure at perceiving several new faces among them, and Jamie felt that each word was directed at him. He looked and listened with interest as the meeting progressed and almost wished that he was prepared to take part. Still his mind was troubled and doubtful. The verses chosen related to forgiveness and the forsaking of sins mainly, and the boys and girls all seemed to enjoy doing their part so much.

By-and-by, however, some one struck a chord that found a responsive echo in the boy's breast. He looked half indignantly towards his companion, who sat innocently before his gaze, only giving him a triumphant smile as the words of the reciter fell on her ear:

"Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

The first seven words of that verse, did they mean him? Jamie blushed and turned towards Lottie. Had she told his disgraceful secret to the others? But then he realized the folly of that supposition and turned his attention to the recitations again.

"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you," came in clear, sweet tones from another bright-faced young girl, and Jamie heard and appropriated greedily the concluding words of that verse, even as he had the beginning of the other, "Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

Surely it was plain that even the sin which he had felt must condemn him might be forgiven, was indeed forgiven, "for Christ's sake." At least it seemed so to him then, and oh, such a strange, sweet feeling of being newly adopted and forgiven came over him! And in after years he looked back upon that summer evening as the true date of his conversion, though it was not till some time later that he publicly united with the church.

Lottie did not resign her hold upon her new member, even when the meeting was dismissed. She kept near him till they had gained the street and then walked away beside him, hastening and allowing him to see that she expected him to keep up with her so that they might be alone.

"Now tell me about it if you would like to," said she, knowing he would understand her.

"Well, it was just like this. Jake Bent and Joe Lanton came along one night about

three weeks ago, and it was a moonlight night, and I stumped 'em to go over to old Gray's barn and get eggs to have a spree in the woods with next day, and—well, we went, that's all. I'm sorry I told on the boys though; I didn't think," he added ruefully.

"Never mind; they shall never know." "And must I go to old Gray and tell him? He'd have it all over the village, and no one would ever trust me again."

"I'd call him Mr. Gray if I were you," suggested Lottie gravely, waiving the question till they had gone on some distance farther. Then she said, with an air of superior wisdom very unlike the merry, thoughtless girl most of her acquaintances judged her to be,

"I think you need not confess to Mr. Gray now. If you are really sorry and mean never to do such a thing again, tell God so; and by-and-by, when you get to be a nice, steady boy whom every one trusts, you can tell him and pay him for the eggs. He wouldn't understand, I am sure, and he would doubtless say something to injure you and prevent your getting on, if you told him now."

Silence reigned for a little time, then Jamie gave utterance to another thought that troubled him,

"What if they won't vote me in, Miss Lottie? They said the new names would be voted upon by the committee, and I'm afraid they won't have me."

"Never fear," replied Lottie reassuringly. "I'm one of the committee myself; and I'd like to see them throw out a name I had handed in anyway," she added, with a little characteristic toss of her head, meant to settle the matter, which it did, and scattered Jamie's doubts as well, so that when he had said "Good night" to Lottie, he went on his way whistling softly and feeling very secure in the possession of his newly-declared friend and champion, who had been the means of filling his mind with thoughts which had never had birth there before and which were very pleasant to him indeed.

Jamie Glen had hitherto been a wild boy, in strong disfavor with most people who knew him, but he gradually came to be regarded differently. Lottie seemed literally to have taken the boy in charge, and her evident liking for and confidence in him went far towards establishing him in the good graces of those who had formerly considered his case hopeless. For certainly Lawyer Western's imperious daughter could be trusted to choose her associates, and none need fear to come in contact with any choice of hers. Oh, if those seated on the high places would only use their power to assist others to rise up beside them instead of crushing them lower still, as is too often the case!

The time came when Jamie Glen held an honored position in the church he had entered so unwillingly that summer evening, and also in the society of the town, whose people had considered him anything but a desirable acquisition when Mr. Gray had first brought him home from the deathbed of his aunt (who was his last relative) to live with him and work for his board and clothes during his minority. All had seemed against him, and he fully appreciated the real kindness and nobleness of heart which had prompted Lottie's untiring championship.

As for Lottie herself, she knew as she grew older that she, too, had reaped great benefit from her experience with her new member, and never regretted having taken him in hand.—*Weekly Illustrated Christian.*

AN HOUR'S serious consideration of so homely a subject as the uses of money, with last year's expense-book beside her, and pencil and note-book in hand would, perhaps, suggest to almost every house-mother some portion of her economy in which she might wisely turn over a new leaf. If she has not a well-kept account-book to refer to, that is the first leaf to turn. Comfort and elegance in dress, table-service, furniture, equipages—all the surroundings of our lives—these are good and desirable when they do not involve the sacrifice of anything more important; but it is well to remember that they are not the chief objects of life, nor the ends for the attainment of which homes are ordained. If we do not desire for our children better things than these, if we do not assume for them higher responsibilities, we are promoting that dangerous tendency toward an exaggerated respect for wealth, and a corresponding depreciation of character, which is the growing peril of our nation and our time.—*Clerical Work.*