

## The Family Circle.

### A WHIFF O' THE CALLER AIR.

Oh, for a breath o' the moorlands,  
A whiff o' the caller air!  
For the scent o' the flowerin' heather  
A' very heart is sair.  
Oh, for the sound o' the burnies  
That wimple o'er the lea,  
For a sight o' the brownin' bracken  
On the hillsides waving free!

Oh, for the blue lochs cradled  
In the arms o' mountains gay,  
That smile as they shadow the drifting clouds  
A' the bonnie simmer day!  
Oh, for the tops o' mountains,  
White wi' eternal snaw!  
For the winds that drift across the lift,  
For the strong east winds that blow!

I'm sick of the blazing sunshine  
That burns through the weary hours;  
O' gaudy birds singing never a song,  
O' beautiful scentless flowers.  
I'd gie a' their southern glory  
For a' taste o' the gude saut wind,  
Wi' a road o'er the bonnie sea before  
And a track o' foam behind.

Auld Scotland may be rugged,  
Her mountains stern and bare,  
But, oh! for a breath o' her moorlands,  
A whiff o' her caller air.

—Margaret Davidson.

### MRS. PHELPS'S REVELATION.

"Madam, I need help; won't you give me something?" The question was addressed to Mrs. Phelps, who had just entered her carriage.

"No, I've no money to waste on lazy vagabonds!" was her sharp reply as the carriage door slammed shut.

Mrs. Phelps, a wealthy young widow, prominent in fashionable society, was in an unpleasant frame of mind. She had just visited three of the largest stores in the city in a vain search for a certain costly fabric, and now felt that she was an exceedingly unfortunate and most ill used individual. Presently the carriage drew up before another store, which Mrs. Phelps entered after instructing her four-year-old son to remain seated in the carriage until her return. Master Phelps was very obedient for about three minutes. Then his attention was attracted by something which appealed to him quite as strongly as to a less aristocratic juvenile—the antics of a monkey under charge of a peripatetic musician. Standing on tiptoe, he laid his hands against the door, which, having been accidentally left unfastened, yielded to the pressure and partly opened; and in a very short time the young gentleman was out of the carriage and half-way across the street. Then, in an instant, there was a hoarse cry of warning, a woman's shriek—and something grasped the boy, swung him from right in front of a runaway team, and laid him, frightened and screaming, in his mother's arms.

After she had soothed the child and put him into the carriage, Mrs. Phelps turned to the rather shabbily dressed man to whose agility her son's rescue was due.

"You have saved my Arthur's life!" she exclaimed. "Come to-morrow to my residence and name your reward. Meanwhile, take this;" and she handed him a twenty-dollar gold piece.

But the man refused the proffered gold.

"Why should you reward a lazy vagabond? That is what you called me a bit ago when I asked you for something," he remarked.

Mrs. Phelps looked at him closely, and recognized him.

"I was out of humor," she explained. "Pardon what I said, and tell me how I can assist you."

"Madam, you've invited me to come

to your home. If you'd do me a kindness, come to mine instead."

Mrs. Phelps looked at him in amazement.

"I can hardly do that," she said. "I would much rather—"

"As you please, madam. I'm glad I was able to rescue your child. If you're glad, I wish you'd visit my home. It isn't much to ask."

"What is your name, and where do you live?"

He said his name was James Thompson, and named an obscure street as his address.

"After I've taken my child home, I'll call to see you," said Mrs. Phelps.

"I'll be there by the time you are," he responded.

An hour later Mrs. Phelps, accompanied by a trusty servant, having driven into a narrow street, entered a most uninviting tenement, and ascending three flights of rickety, filthy stairs, was admitted to a small attic room, lighted by a single window. The floor was carpetless. A cracked stove, an old table, a large box which served as a cupboard, a bed, and two or three broken-backed chairs, were the only furniture. But though so bare and comfortless, the room was clean. Upon the scantily covered bed lay two persons—a woman of perhaps thirty-five and a little girl of about six—both evidently ill and both sleeping uneasily.

"I asked you to come here because I wanted you to see this," said Thompson in a low voice. "This"—with a comprehensive wave of the hand—"is my home. You see all my furniture—except what's at the pawnshop. I have no fire, and no fuel to make it with; no food, and no money to buy it with. I have a little medicine left by the doctor, but none of the comforts needed by my sick wife and child. This, Madam, is why I asked you for help this morning."

Mrs. Phelps covered her face.

"I never dreamed of anything like this," she said.

"There are many things which you rich people never dream of," said Thompson bitterly.

"How long have you been in this deplorable condition?" asked Mrs. Phelps.

"To-day is the first I've had to beg," was the reply; "something I'd have thrown myself into the river rather than do if it hadn't been for them. But I couldn't see them starve. I came to the city five years and more ago," he added after a moment's pause. "I had bad luck for work was dull. From having a little house by ourselves, we were obliged to move here, and then my wife, who was a good seamstress, succeeded in getting men's trousers to make at eighteen cents a pair."

"Eighteen cents a pair!" exclaimed Mrs. Phelps.

"Yes; but the price soon fell to fifteen cents, and as I was out of employment, I helped with the sewing. By working from early in the morning till late at night we managed to earn enough to pay our rent and buy sufficient food to keep us from starving. But the rates went down, down, down, to thirteen, to twelve, even to ten cents a pair."

"What! Ten cents for making a pair of trousers? Who is mean enough to pay such wages as that?"

"The great clothing firm of Phelps & Co., madam!"

"Phelps & Co.! Impossible!"

"The firm, madam, of which your

husband was the head. I wonder if, when he gave largely to some library, church or hospital, he ever thought of the poor wretches who toiled day and night, summer and winter, with aching eyes, weary fingers and hungry stomachs, that the mill which ground out his money might turn him out a good-sized grist! I can take you to half a dozen families in this very house who make trousers for Phelps & Co. at the same prices, and who, like us, have finished coats at from five to ten cents each, and made knee pants at sixteen to eighteen cents a dozen pairs."

"Eighteen cents a dozen pairs! You don't mean that?"

"Yes, madam, I do. When Phelps & Co. pay ten cents for making a pair of trousers which sells for five dollars, is it any wonder that the firm prospers exceedingly, and that your husband was able to give away his thousands?"

"This is a revelation to me," said Mrs. Phelps. "I cannot see how you managed to exist at all."

"It's been a hard, hard struggle," replied Thompson. "With the aid of our little girl—for she has been sewing ever since she was four years old—we were occasionally able to earn a dollar in a day; but that was seldom. We had to pay a dollar and a quarter per week for this room, and hardly ever had more than four dollars a week to feed, clothe and warm the three of us. But for the last six months, the child has been ill. Ten days ago my wife took sick, and because of having to wait on her and the child, I was able to do so little sewing that the foreman got angry the other day and refused to give me any more work. Besides, we have been falling behind with the rent, and only yesterday I received notice that if I don't pay up by the end of the week, I and my sick family must leave."

"Outrageous! Who is your landlord?"

Thompson took a paper from his pocket, and remarking that it was his last receipt, handed it to Mrs. Phelps, who, after a single glance, started, and then stood staring at it in open-mouthed astonishment. For her own name was affixed to the receipt!

"What!" she ejaculated as soon as she could find her voice. "This house—mine!"

"So it seems."

"This is my agent's work," said Mrs. Phelps, half to herself. "And he would have turned you into the street! Horrible!"

She opened her pocketbook and took out some bills.

"Mr. Thompson," she said, "I thank you for insisting that I should come here. You have opened my eyes to some things I was blind to before. Take this—it is only a very small part of the heavy debt I owe you. Buy fuel, food, clothing, furniture, medicines—whatever you and your sick family most require. Spend it freely, but pay no rent; this room shall never cost you another cent."

"God bless you, madam!" Thompson exclaimed, his eyes filling with tears. "I take your gifts now with a glad and thankful heart. I felt sure that all you needed was to see and understand. But, O, remember that there are others in this house almost as badly off as you found me."

"I shall not forget," said Mrs. Phelps as she departed.

Upon reaching home, Mrs. Phelps went to her room and shut herself in. Her visit to James Thompson had indeed been a revelation to her. How had she

discharged the responsibility which the possession of great wealth carries with it? By lavishing money on flowers, music, rich viands and the like, when so many were lacking the necessities of life. And most humiliating thought of all much of the very wealth which she enjoyed had been earned for her by those same starving poor. Theirs it was—not hers—if justice were done. In her humiliation she knelt and offered what was, perhaps, the first real prayer that had risen from her lips for a long time; a prayer in which she craved pardon for the thoughtlessness, selfishness and frivolity of the past, and consecrated her wealth to the service of Christ and of those concerning whom He said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . ye have done it unto Me."

A year has passed. James Thompson with his wife and daughter, both of whom have been restored to health, are living in a neat, pleasant house, the gift of Mrs. Phelps, through whose instrumentality Thompson has procured lucrative employment. The year has witnessed some other changes, too—especially in the real estate owned by Mrs. Phelps. Very promptly she called upon her agent and gave that individual some instructions which fairly took his breath away. She obtained from him a list of all tenements owned by her, and then set to work to systematically visit each house and the families occupying it. Such poverty, squalor and degradation as she encountered! As a result of this inspection, she ordered a general reduction of the rents, a thorough cleaning of all the houses and numerous repairs, while some crazy habitations she ordered to be demolished.

A company of philanthropic persons, organized through her efforts, purchased an entire block of rickety tenements, tore them down, and erected a series of modern structures in which suites of rooms were offered at rates far lower than those prevailing in the surrounding tenements. The houses were soon filled with a population who had clean quarters to start with and every inducement to keep them so. And contrary to all expectations, the enterprise has yielded a fair rate of interest on the money invested in it.

Phelps & Co. no longer pay starvation wages to their employees. Mrs. Phelps's husband had bequeathed her a controlling interest in the firm, and one day she startled the other partners by proposing a heavy increase in the rates paid for making up clothing. They demurred, and said that such an increase would bankrupt the firm. But Mrs. Phelps persisted in her demand, and finally induced the senior partner to accompany her to the abodes of some of the people employed by the firm. They had not visited many places when he said he had seen quite enough.

"How do you suppose the patronage of Phelps & Co. would be affected," asked Mrs. Phelps, "if our customers were aware that their new garments had been lying a few hours before on the dirty floor of a tenement, or on the bed of a child sick with a contagious disease?"

Being unable to answer this question satisfactorily, both partners quietly submitted to the inevitable. The wages were raised, and far from becoming bankrupt, the firm of Phelps & Co. is more prosperous than ever. And Mrs. Phelps to-day is a very cheerful, happy woman—far happier than when she was a devotee at the altar of fashion. For she knows that