

OUR HOME CIRCLE.

AN EVENING PRAYER.

I come to Thee to-night,
On this lone mountain where no eye can see,
And dare to crave an interview with Thee,
Father of love and light.

Softly the moonbeams shine
On the still branches of the shadowy trees,
While all sweet sounds of evening on the breeze
Steal through the slumbering vine.

Thou gav'st the calm repose
That rests on all the air, the bird, the flower,
The human spirit in its weary hour—
Now at the bright day's close.

'Tis Nature's time for prayer;
The silent prisms of the glorious sky,
And the earth's orisons profound and high,
To heaven their breathings bear.

With them my soul would bend
In humble reverence at Thy holy throne,
Trusting the merits of Thy Son alone,
Thy sceptre to extend.

If I this day have striven
With Thy blest Spirit, or have bowed the knee
To aught of earth, in weak idolatry,
I pray to be forgiven.

If in my heart has been
An unforgiving thought or word, or look—
Though deep the malice which I scarce could
Wash me from this dark sin.

If I have turned away
From grief or suffering which I might relieve,
Careless the "cup of water" 'e'en to give,
Forgive me, Lord, I pray.

And teach me how to feel
My sinful wanderings with a deeper smart,
And more of mercy and of grace impart,
My sinfulness to heal.

Father, my soul would be
Pure as the drops of dew's unclouded dew,
And as the stars, whose nightly course is true,
No would I be to Thee.

Nor for myself alone
Would I these blessings of Thy love implore,
But for each penitent, the wide earth o'er,
Whom Thou hast called Thine own.

And for my heart's best friends,
Whose steadfast kindness o'er my painful years
Has watch'd to soothe the affliction's grief and tears,
My warmest prayer ascends.

Should o'er their path decline
The light of gladness, or of hope, or health,
Be Thou their solace, and their joy and wealth,
As they have long been mine.

And now, O Father, take
The heart I cast with humble faith on Thee,
And cleanse its depths from each impurity
For my Redeemer's sake.

THE JULY PRAYER-MEETING.

"It is a very warm evening! Really I cannot endure the thought of sitting in that close room for an hour. I don't believe I will go to prayer-meeting to-night." So said a young Christian man, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, and settled himself in an easy chair on the verandah, to catch the coolest breath that blew.

"Not going out to night?" asked a cheery voice proceeding from an open door near by.

"No, Mary, it is so fearfully hot! Besides, so many people are out of town the prayer-meetings are rather dull."

"Well I was just thinking that is the very reason we ought to go. Come, may be you will catch a 'heavenly breeze' that will do you more good than these puffs, sweet as they are; for they only touch your cheek, and you want something for that parched heart of yours after the hot and busy tumult of the city."

He looked up into the face at once so cheery, yet so earnest. "I believe you have the refreshment of those heavenly breezes all the while," he said. "You know 'no change of season or place' in your heart-life, I think."

"O, yes, I do, but come, the bell is ringing," she replied. "Strange what power one soul can use over another despite the inertia of a July evening."

Very soon the leader of the prayer-meeting was encouraged by the addition, though a little late, of two more to the rather small circle gathered in the chapel. And the never failing promise met its fulfilment once again that evening.

That One, who is "the same" in July as in December, was "in the midst." He uses the most trifling sometimes, as the means of his richest blessings, and this was the way he brought good cheer to one soul that night. It was not only weariness of the body and the oppressive heat that had caused our friend to hesitate about going to the meeting. Business had fretted him that day—very perplexing questions had arisen—he had said to himself more than once, "I really am discouraged; I don't know what course is best for me to take." As he entered the meeting they were singing the well-worn hymn, "What a friend we have in Jesus," and as these lines fell on his ear.

We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer,
A voice, deeper than human tones,
Sung the words right into the young man's soul. He felt the burden lifting; communion with God seemed very restful.

Once again during the meeting, some one, not remembering that the words had been used before, sung out:

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Again the message came straight to his heart, and leaping to his feet

he said: "Friends, I have been greatly beset with testings and trials of various kinds of late. My way has seemed quite hedged up at times. I have been discouraged, but I am convinced that God sent me to this service to-night to receive this message from himself—that I should never be discouraged. You have sung those words twice this evening. They have been God's message to me. My doubts are gone. I know he will lead me in all things, temporal and spiritual, for faithful is he that hath promised."

What a loss it would have been had that young man, self-indulgently, lounged upon his verandah that evening. No breath of roses, or whisper of trees, from any garden or hill-side, could have brought that refreshment to his "parched-up heart," as his friend had truly called it. He might, indeed, have found the Lord and heard his voice, had he sought him at home; but as long as the Saviour's word abides, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst," we may be sure that is the chosen place where he will especially meet and talk with his people.

BLIND MEN.

Prescott the historian, and Prof. Fawcett, of England, illustrate the will-power of those who, stricken blind by calamity, have yet achieved success in life. Instead of mourning over the precious treasure of eyesight lost, they have gone to work. Adapting themselves to their situation, they have shown what training and persistent effort could do. But James Goodsell, who recently died in Burlington, Vt., was blind from his birth to his death—a period of ninety years. Yet what he did shows that even this terrible misfortune is not an insuperable obstacle in the way of a man determined to make the most of himself.

In spite of his misfortune, he would swing an axe with dexterity, and felled trees; he was an accomplished grain thresher, and would frequently go alone a distance of two miles to thresh for the farmers, climbing the mows to throw down the grain; he would hoe corn or garden stuffs as well as anybody, and having no trouble to distinguish the weeds; he would set a hundred beans with more accuracy than most people who can see; would load hay, and was so good a mechanic that he manufactured yokes and other farm articles with success.

He had an excellent memory, and was an authority on facts and dates. He could generally tell the time of the day or night within a few minutes.

One instance is given when he slept over one day, and awoke at evening thinking it was morning. For once he eat supper for breakfast, but when informed of his mistake slept another twelve hours in order to get straight again.

He was familiar with forest trees and knew just where to go for any timber desired. He could direct men where to find a chestnut, a maple or an oak, and the children where to go for berries.

He was a good mathematician, and could compute accurately and rapidly. In olden days he was quite musically inclined, and like most blind people he had a genius in that direction.

He was at one time leader of the Presbyterian choir. To crown all, he possessed one of the happiest dispositions, and was ever genial and cheerful. To this end his generally excellent health largely contributed.

THE RUSSIAN CLERGY.

Russian society, sceptical to the core, has unfortunately a parochial clergy utterly incapable of putting itself into relation with the thinking portion of the community, a clergy among whom men of literature and men of the world alike have ceased to look for learning or moral elevation. Neither in their writings nor in their ministrations, still less in social intercourse, are the Russian clergy as a body able, or apparently willing, to enter into the discussion of those problems of life and mind which border on religion. But the negation of the infinite leads inevitably to Nihilism; and philosophical Nihilism, in its practical application, ends in the disintegration of the social and moral life of the nation. In fact, the influence of the clergy at this momentous crisis is most unwholesome, it is that of the salt which has lost its savor.

Illiterate themselves, furnished with scanty information picked up in ill-organized seminaries, they fail entirely as pioneers of culture among one of the most backward peasantries of modern Europe.

"God be thanked," a devout Russian layman is reported to have said,

"the Eastern Church has never ruled that religious light and instruction are confined to the clergy!" It is a pity that what light there is is almost entirely confined to the laity, who themselves are only in the possession of refracted light from German and French sources. But an ignorant priesthood will of necessity put impediments in the way of intellectual advancement. Thus we find the reading of the Bible not forbidden indeed, yet at the same time not encouraged. Priest and people kiss the book reverently, but otherwise neglect it. Cases have come under the notice of the present writer of copies of the Bible having been carefully wrapped up and put by in the houses of peasants with the remark, "Now little mother, the good God cannot be hard on us when we have such a sacred treasure in the house." Religious ignorance accordingly reigns supreme. An instance, related by an English traveller, of a Russian peasant who, being asked if he could name the three persons of the Trinity, replied without hesitation, "Of course, it is the Saviour, the Mother of God and St. Nicholas the Miracle worker," is by no means a very unusual exhibition of ignorance.

Religion amounts in many cases to mere Czar worship. "What kind of obedience do we owe to the Czar?" inquires the Catechism. Answer: "An entire, passive, and unbounded obedience in every point of view." The Czar, in short, is "the infallible viceregent of God Almighty." The devotions of the people are reduced to mechanical formulae, there are no service books in which to follow the prayers of the Church, and sermons are seldom preached to appeal to their minds and consciences. The sight of a small prayer-book in the hand of a lady at mass causes much concern to an old-fashioned church-goer in one of Tourgenieff's novels: "What is she about?" he exclaims. "God forgive me! She must be a witch—or what?"

In the report on ecclesiastical matters by Count Tolstoi, already referred to—a rather portly volume—two pages only are occupied with preaching, where it says, however, very properly, that the religious and moral education of the people depends on Church schools and preaching in the first instance. Religious acts are regarded more in the light of magic incantations, and religious belief degenerates into degrading superstition. Faith in the wonder-working power of icons and sacred relics is unbounded.

The effect of this on the minds of the higher classes, half-cultured themselves, biases, and morally vitiated is most pernicious, whilst students of science and the Modern Russian party, with its strong leanings toward realistic views of life, turn away disgusted from the teaching of a clergy whom they consider only as ignorant bores. The Nihilist conspirators mostly belong to this advanced section, and it is a notable fact that not one of them when condemned in former State trials, would have anything to do with the "comforts of religion," but scornfully rejected the offices of the Church in the extreme moment. —Macmillan's Magazine.

THE WIFE'S SECRET.

"I will tell you the secret of our happy married life," said a gentleman of three-score and ten. "We have been married forty years; my bride was belle of New York when I married her, and though I loved her for herself, still a lovely flower is all the lovelier poised in an exquisite vase. My wife, I know this, and true to her genuine refinement has never in all these forty years appeared at the table or allowed me to see her less carefully dressed than during the days of our honeymoon. Some might call this foolish vanity; I call it real womanliness. I presume I should not have ceased to love her had she followed the example of many others, and considering the every day life of home necessarily devoid of beauty, allowed herself to be careless of such small matters as dressing for her husband's eye; but love is increased when we are proud of the object loved, and to-day I am more proud of my beautiful wife with her silver hair and gentle face than of the bride whose loveliness was the theme of every tongue. Any young lady can win a lover; how few keep them such after years of married life!"

In all the little courtesies of life, in all that makes one attractive and charming, in thoughtfulness of others and forgetfulness of self, every home should be begun and continued. Men should be more careful to sympathize and protect the wife than the bride—more willing to pick up her scissors, hand her the paper, or carry her packages, than if she were a young lady; and as no lady would for a moment think of controlling the movements

and engagements of a young gentleman, neither should she do so when he is her husband. If by making herself bright and attractive she fails to hold him, compulsion will only drive him farther from her. I do not believe it possible to retain the friendship of anyone by demanding it. I do not believe it possible to lose it by being lovable.—Alliance.

SELF LOVE.

Oh, I could go through all life's troubles singing,
Turning earth's night to day,
If self were not so fast around me, clinging
To all I do or say.

My very thoughts are selfish, always building
Mean castles in the air;
I use my love for others for a guiding
To make myself look fair.

I fancy all the world engaged in judging
My merit or my blame;
Its warmest praise seems an ungracious grudging
Of praise which I might claim.

In youth, or age, by city, wood or mountain,
Self is forgotten never;
Where'er we tread, it gushes like a fountain,
Its waters flow forever.

O miserable omnipresence, stretching
Over all time and space,
How have I run from thee, yet found thee
The goal in every race.

Inevitable self! vile imitation
Of universal light—
Within our hearts a dreadful usurpation
Of God's exclusive right!

F. W. Faber.

WORK AND PLAY.

And then remember, my son, you have to work. Whether you handle a pick or pen, wheelbarrow or a set of books, digging ditches or editing a newspaper, ringing an auction bell or writing funny things, you must work. If you look around you, you will see that the men who are most able are the men who work the hardest. Don't be afraid of killing yourself with overwork, son. It is beyond your power to do that. Men cannot work so hard as that on the sunny side of thirty. They die sometimes, but it's because they quit work at 6 p. m. and don't go home until 2 a. m. It's the interval that kills, my son. The work gives you an appetite for your meals, it lends solidity to your slumber, it gives you a perfect and graceful appreciation of a holiday.

There are young men who do not work, my son; young men who can make a living by sucking the end of a cane, whose entire mental development is sufficient to tell them which side of a postage stamp to lick; young men who can tie a necktie in eleven different knots and never lay a wrinkle in it; who can spend more money in a day than you can earn in a month, but who will go to the sheriff's office to buy a postal card, and apply at the office of the street commissioner for a marriage license. But the world is not proud of them, son. It does not know their names, even. Nobody likes them, nobody hates them, the great, busy world don't even know they are there. Things will go on just as well without them. So find out what you want to be, and do this; take off your coat and make a dust in the world. The busier you are, the less mischief you will be apt to get into, and sweeter will be your sleep, the brighter and happier your holidays, and the better satisfied will the world be with you.—Burlington Hawkeye.

SAVED THROUGH A SCHEDULE.

The following instance of conversion through a Sunday-school schedule seems to be worthy of record. A Sunday-school union had lately been formed in the circuit. In connection with this organization, yearly gatherings of all the teachers in the circuit were held, for the purpose of conversation and prayer in reference to their work. On these occasions a schedule was read containing various statistics of all schools in the Union. It was through the reading of one of these yearly schedules that the conversion to which we have referred took place. One of the columns upon the schedule contained a statement of the number of teachers in each school who were members of society. The entry in this column, opposite the name of one of the schools, for a particular year, was to the effect that thirty of the teachers were members of society, and one not; and in this form it was read out to the meeting. The teacher who constituted this single exception was present when the schedule was read, and the two words "one not" fell upon his ear with solemn weight. The meeting concluded and he went home; but he could not throw off the impression he had received. And his newly-excited emotions were the more quieting from the fact that he had not yielded his heart to Christ. The sad anomaly of his position forced itself upon him. He saw himself isolated from his fellow-teachers. He thought that he alone of all the one and thirty teachers of the

school who were engaged in pointing the little ones to Christ, had not himself sought pardon and salvation at the Saviour's feet, lay like a load of lead upon his heart. That night he sought and obtained through Christ the pardon of his sins, and, at the earliest opportunity, fully and formally united himself to the people of God.—Christian Miscellany.

BUSYBODIES.

These persons are thrice referred to by name in the Epistles. It describes those who attend very diligently to other people's affairs and neglect their own. Paul avers concerning one church: "For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies." History repeats itself. Under given conditions the same traits of character are developed. In what church, ancient or modern, or in what religious society, or secular for that matter, has not this mischievous, idle activity prevailed more or less? Diligent in meddling! but latterly lazy as to any useful industry.

The same Apostle, with true Pauline force and point, referring to certain women of the Christian society, says:—"And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." Of the three places where busybodies are mentioned, it is fair to say that only this one applies wholly and unmistakably to the better sex. There were such women in the church in apostolic times, women who gave both Paul and Timothy no little trouble, we should judge. They were women of a social turn, who neglected their domestic duties, and devoted much of their time to neighborhood and society gossip. It does not appear that this tattling about was connected with sewing societies and missionary meetings, or with women's exchanges or temperance circles. It was gossip, pure and simple, connected with no kind or pretence of useful work. It was perhaps merely tattle about other people, the unbridled tongue turned loose upon the world in general, and the members of the church at Ephesus in particular. Idle hands and busy, flippant, bitter tongues! How naturally, and almost necessarily, they go together. Modern society is not clear of this evil!

Female busybodies we may hope are rare, but one sinner of this sort destroyeth much good. A woman perverted into a busybody is an angel fallen; the noblest work of God blighted, frightfully distorted and horribly deformed.

Peter places the busybody in very disreputable company: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." An overseer in the concerns of others seems to be the character here described; assuming to be bishop in another man's diocese. To put the busybody in such company is significant. Not so bad as a murderer, or a thief, perhaps, but bad enough to be named in the same connection. The Christian may go out of his own proper province or sphere, and thus awaken an opposition or even persecution, greatly to his own detriment and to the damage of the cause of Christ.—New Orleans Adv.

THE ABBE AND PENITENT.

In the reign of Louis XIV., a certain brilliant Abbe was one of a large party who had assembled round the Royal supper-table. There were clever talkers, sharp dealers in epigram, skilful bandiers of compliment and repartee. One lady, famous for her wit, being asked to name the three sights that gave her the greatest pleasure, replied: "A great general on a war horse; a great preacher on a platform; and a great thief on a gallows." The Abbe added to the mirth of the evening by telling the adventures of a gay and memorable career. "I remember," he said, "very well the first penitent who came to my confessional. I was young then, and little accustomed to hear the secrets of Court life. It was a murderer, who told me the story of his crime." The Abbe was pressed to tell the tale, or to give a clue to the culprit; but he kept a guarded and wary silence.

Presently in came one of the most trusty of the King's favorites. "Ah, M. l'Abbe," he said—recognizing an old friend; "gentleman, I was the first penitent whom the Abbe ever shrived, and I promise you, when I told him my story, he heard what astonished him!" That night the nobleman was carried to the Bastille, and the evidence of a crime, committed thirty years before, was complete and the culprit detected.—London Globe.

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

EDNA'S TRIAL.

"Mamma, there is one thing I am sure of, and that is, that I can never be good as long as I have to live with Sandy."

"Oh, Edna, think a moment—do not speak so; you are blaming your brother for your own naughtiness!" "Well, he makes me naughty. I'm always worse when he's in the house. Doesn't that show that I'm not really so bad? I want to be good and keep my temper, but as soon as Sandy comes where I am, he is sure to do something to vex me, and I can't help getting cross and saying something hateful!"

"Come here, my dear," and the mother laid down her work with that pleasant way which mothers have of showing that they are willing to give their whole attention to the case in hand. Drawing Edna close to her side, she said: "I will tell you what it shows; it shows simply that you are not strong enough to resist strong temptations. Nothing is easier for us all than to think ourselves angelic because we happen to live with people of easy tempers, or who smooth our way for us with kindness and love. And I think it shows something else, too—that you have not that true sisterly feeling towards Sandy which should make you bear with him in spite of his faults and annoyances."

"I don't think he's got a very brotherly feeling toward me, or he wouldn't treat me so!" muttered Edna.

"I don't defend his conduct, replied her mother. 'You know that I have reproved and punished him for irritating you; but I want you to see plainly that what he brings out is really in you, else he could not bring it out. It might be possible for a person to live for years without doing anything flagrantly bad; he might, on the whole, seem to be quite good enough; and yet this same person might in the end do some very dreadful things, thus showing himself to have been full of the possibilities of wickedness all the time.'

"I don't think I quite understand you, mamma."

"Well, I will try to make it plainer. You remember the poor little girl with spinal disease whom I took you to see last winter, and you remember that her mother also was hump-backed. When Emmy was born, though she was straight and well formed, yet the doctors said that it was unlikely that she would inherit her mother's disease—that is, that the germ or seed of the disease was probably in the baby's blood, and would develop some day, sooner or later. Yet for twelve years there was no sign of such a thing happening. Emmy grew tall and seemed well and strong. But the day came at length when she had a fall, bruising her back, and then the dreadful disease, which had been lying quiet for years, just waiting for a chance to show itself, made its appearance, and poor Emmy is helpless for life. Now, you know that many people get very bad falls without serious injury. They can even hurt their backs without having spinal complaint as a necessary consequence; but this case of Emmy's shows that the bad seed was in her all the time. The fall did not put it there, but only brought it out. Some other fall, a bruise, some illness, would have been almost sure to have brought the same result. And now must I apply my illustration or does it explain itself?"

Edna looked up with a very knowing expression, and said: "I see what you mean, mamma; I know now that the badness is in me, and that if Sandy did not start it, somebody else would some day. I cannot be sure that I am good until I have resisted the hardest temptations."

"Yes; trials are not sent to make us bad, but good—or rather, they are to show us how much good and how much bad we have in us—how weak we are and how strong. Remember Jesus in the wilderness. If temptations have power in themselves alone to corrupt, surely I would seem he might almost have fallen. The devil tried him hard and long, but he found him unconquerable—incurruptible. Thomas a Kempis once wrote certain words which I will repeat to you, hoping you will think of them the very next time Sandy comes in your way. They are true, are they not?"

"Occasions do not make a man frail, but they show what he is." —N. Y. Observer.

"Aim at speciality in business," said a successful merchant to a young man. "Most people succeed, not by doing many things as well as others; but some one thing better than others."