



### The Family Circle.

#### "A LITTLE BAD."

BY HARDY JACKSON.

"Come, darling, come!" The voice was sweet,  
Yet baby only shook her head,  
And so, in tones all tenderness,  
Rebukingly her mother said,

"I'm sorry you're so wilful, dear,  
I called, you would not come, but stood;  
Now go into the dining-room  
And don't come back till you are good."

A sudden meekness seized the child,  
With eyes bent downward to the floor,  
Obedient now, she straightway went,  
Yet paused a moment at the door.

Her face revealed a strife within,  
A veil more thin no spirit had;  
She raised her earnest eyes and said,  
"Mayn't I be a little bad?"

O human nature! still the same,  
In child, man or woman grown,  
That when God says, "give me your heart,"  
Would keep a portion for its own—

Some cherished sin, some fault that lies  
Twixt us and Heaven when we would pray,  
Not knowing that surrender blest,  
Enriches while it takes away.

Not almost, altogether Thine,  
Help us, O Lord, henceforth to be,  
To give ourselves a sacrifice  
Holy, acceptable to Thee.

### THE WONDERFUL BOX.

BY HARRIETTA REA.

Twenty-five years ago the region that lay west of the Mississippi River was called the frontier. After the present line of railways had been well established in one of these States, and to towns were large and flourishing, a call for a ministers' convention was given by a well-known and beloved clergyman. This convention was, in many respects, unique. Only those who had borne a part in the early organization of the churches were invited. A prayer-meeting in the morning was held in the vestry. With the overwhelming rush of testimony from these "dwellers in the wilderness," and the magnetic power of sympathy, the spirit of the "upper room" fell upon this meeting, and one hour lengthened into two. The leader requested that Bible promises might be repeated, but only those that had been lived upon through some time of need. The power and pathos with which many of them were given, by men and women, cannot be described. There was a lunch at noon, a sermon in the afternoon upon "I will direct all his ways," and a dinner at five o'clock in the hall near by. An evening of social reunion at the pastor's house closed this delightful day. All were to leave the next morning for their different homes. A consciousness of its being the last time made everybody linger until a late hour, so there was time for the ladies to gather by themselves around a great open fire in one of the chambers of that hospitable mansion. Some one spoke of a trial, and another of a blessing, until all had settled down for an earnest talk that left upon each heart the hush of a benediction. One vivid experience, brought up from the depths of reality, was given by the wife of the clergyman who had called them together. Her field of usefulness had perhaps been the widest and most successful: "I remember a day, during one winter, that stands out like a boulder in my life. The weather was unusually cold; our salary had not been regularly paid, and it did not meet our needs when it was. My husband was away, travelling from one district to another much of the time. Our boys were well, but my little Ruth was ailing, and at the best none of us were decently clothed. I patched and repatched, with spirits sinking to their lowest ebb. The water gave out in the wells, and the wind blew through the cracks in the floor. The people in the parish were kind, and generous too, but the settlement was new, and each family was struggling for themselves. Little by little, at the very time when I needed it most, my faith began to waver. Early in life I was taught to take God at his word, and I thought my

lesson had been well learned. I had lived upon the promises in dark times until I knew, as David did, who was my Fortress and Deliverer. Now a daily prayer for forgiveness was all I could offer. My husband's overcoat was hardly thick enough for October, and he was obliged to ride miles to attend some meeting or funeral. Many a time our breakfast was Indian cake and a cup of tea without sugar. Christmas was coming; the children always expected their presents. I remember that the ice was thick and smooth, and the boys were each craving a pair of skates. Ruth, in some unaccountable way, had taken a fancy that the dolls I had made were no longer suitable; she wanted a large, nice one, and insisted upon praying for it. I knew it was impossible, but, oh! how I wanted to give each child its present! It seemed as if God had deserted us; but I did not tell my husband of all this. He worked so earnestly and heartily I supposed him to be hopeful as ever. I kept the sitting room cheery with an open fire, and tried to serve our scanty meals as invitingly as I could. The morning before Christmas James was called to a sick man. I put up a piece of bread for his lunch—it was the best I could do—wrapped my plaid shawl around his neck, and then tried to whisper a promise, as I often had, but the words died away on my lips—I let him go without it. That was a dark, hopeless day. I coaxed the children to bed early for I could not bear their talk. When Ruth went I listened to her prayer; she asked, for the last time, most explicitly, for her doll, and for skates for her brothers. Her bright face looked so lovely when she whispered to me, 'You know, I think they'll be here to-morrow morning early, mamma,' that I thought I could move heaven and earth to save her from the disappointment. I sat down alone and gave way to the bitterest tears.

"Before long James returned, chilled and exhausted. He drew off his boots; the thin stockings slipped off with them, and his feet were red with cold. 'I wouldn't treat a dog this way,' I said, wickedly, to myself, 'let alone a faithful servant.' Then, as I glanced up and noticed the hard lines in his face, and the look of despair, it flashed over me—James had let go too! I brought him a cup of tea, feeling sick and dizzy at the very thought. He took my hand, and we sat for half an hour without a word. I wanted to die, and meet God, and tell him his promise wasn't true—my soul was full of rebellious despair.

"There came a sound of bells, a quick step, and a loud knock at the door. James sprang to open it. There stood Deacon Pike. 'A box came along for you by express—just before dark. I brought it around as soon as I could get away; reckoned it might be for Christmas; any rate, I said, they shall have it to-night. Here's a turkey my wife asked me to fetch along, and these other things I believe belong to you.' There was a basket of eggs, a bushel of potatoes, and a bag of flour. Talking all the time, he hurried in the box, and then, with a hearty good-night, rode away.

"Still without speaking, James found a chisel, and pried open the cover. I drew out at first a thick red blanket, and we saw that beneath it was full of clothing.

"It seemed, at that moment, as if Christ fastened upon me a look of reproach. James sat down and covered his face with his hands. 'I can't touch them!' he exclaimed. 'I haven't been true, just when God was trying me to see if I could hold out. Do you think I did not see how you were suffering, and I had no word of comfort to offer? I know now how to preach the awfulness of turning away from God.'

"'James,' I said, clinging to him, 'don't take it to heart like this. I've been to blame. I ought to have helped you. We will ask him together to forgive us.'

"'Wait a moment, dear; I cannot talk now,' and then he went into another room.

"I knelt down, and my heart broke in an instant. All the darkness, all the stubbornness, rolled away. Jesus came again, and stood before me, but now with the loving word 'Daughter!' Sweet promises of tenderness and joy flooded my soul. I was so lost in praise and gratitude that I forgot everything else. I don't know how long it was before James came back, but I saw that he, too, had found forgiveness and peace. 'Now, dear wife,' he said, 'let us thank God together,' and then he poured out words of praise—Bible words, for nothing less could

express our thanksgiving. It was eleven o'clock; the fire was low, and there was the great box, and nothing touched but the warm blanket we needed so much. We piled on some fresh logs, lighted two candles, and began to examine our treasures. We drew out an overcoat. I made James try it on. Just the right size, and I danced round him, for all my light-heartedness had returned. Then there was a warm cloak, and he insisted on seeing me in it. My spirits always infected him, and we both laughed like foolish children. There was a full suit of clothes also, and three pairs of warm woollen hose. There was a dress for me, nice and new, and yards of flannel. A pair of Arctic overshoes for each of us, and in mine was a slip of paper: I have it now, and mean to hand it down to my children. It was Jacob's blessing to Asher: 'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be.' In the gloves, evidently for James, the same dear hand had written: 'I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee.'

"It was a wonderful box, and packed with thoughtful care. There was a suit of clothes for each of the boys, and a little red gown for Ruth. There were mittens and scarfs and hoods; down in the centre a box—we opened it, and there lay a great wax doll. I burst into tears again, and James wept with me for joy, it was too much; and then we both exclaimed again, for close beside it were two pairs of skates. There were books for us to read—some of those I had wished to see—stories for the children, aprons and underclothing, knots of ribbon, a gay little tidy, and a lovely photograph; needles, buttons, and thread—actually a muff, and an envelope inclosing a ten-dollar gold piece. At the last we cried over everything we took up. It was past midnight. We were faint and exhausted even with happiness. I made a cup of tea, cut a fresh loaf of bread, and James boiled some eggs. We drew up the table before the fire. How we enjoyed our supper. And then we sat talking over all our life, and how sure a helper God had always proved.

"You should have seen the children next morning. The boys raised a shout at the sight of their skates. Ruth caught up her doll, and hugged it tightly, without a word. Then she went into her room, and knelt down by the bed. When she came back she whispered to me: 'I knew it would be here, mamma, but I wanted to thank God just the same, you know.' Look here, wife, see the difference.' We went to the window, and there were the two boys, out of the house already, and skating away on the crust with all their might.

"My husband and I both tried to return our thanks to the church at the East that sent us the box, and we've tried to return thanks to God every day since. Hard times have come again and again, but we have trusted in him, dreading nothing so much as a doubt of his protecting care. Over and over again we have proved that 'they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.'—*Christian Union.*

### TWO ESCAPES.

"I always like to hear people say that they believe in special providences," said aunt Ruth, on one occasion when she came in with her knitting work to sit a little while.

"It gives me a world of comfort to think that God takes thought of me. I have had several experiences, that could be accounted for in no other way, that are remarkable enough, it seems to me, to strengthen any one's faith. The first time such an interposition came directly home to my heart was when I was quite a young woman. I was driving with my husband and my sister-in-law in a lonely country way. We had a livery-stable team; the horse was decidedly skittish, and as we went tearing down a long hill I caught a glimpse of an old man standing with his back toward us in a peculiar, shrinking, cringing attitude in the brush beside the road. Acting upon an uncontrollable impulse, I seized the reins, pulling up the horse with all my strength and crying out, 'I want to speak to him!' in such an excited voice that my husband commanded the horse to stop. The old man turned a white face toward us, and just at that moment, without warning of bell or whistle, a locomotive went flying across the road in front of us. The horse reared; the old man caught him by the

bridle, saying brokenly, 'Thank God, you are saved!'

"We were all paralyzed for the moment, then my husband found voice to say:

"What railway is that? I had no idea there was a railway within miles of this place."

"It's the new 'Mill River Branch,'" explained the old man. 'They have just put down the rails, and the engines of the construction trains have been running wild here for two or three days. I saw one of them coming the very moment that I caught sight of you with this horse, that we consider hereabouts to be almost unmanageable. I was sure I could not stop him, and I turned my back to escape seeing you crushed or thrown into the air by the engine.'

"What possessed you to desire to speak to that old man?" said my husband. 'I never knew you to be so actuated before. Indeed, you are always decidedly averse to my accosting any chance wayfarer.'

"I cannot explain it in any natural way," I replied. 'It was a sudden uncontrollable impulse that did not allow me to wait for an instant's consideration.'

"It was a thought from the Lord," said the old man. 'No Christian can doubt that it was a direct interposition of Divine Providence to save you from a certain death.'

"There is a great comfort in the thought," said grandma Beals. 'The incident reminds me of an experience of my own some years ago. One frosty winter's day my son John and I were driving quite rapidly along the beaten snow-path between two large manufacturing villages. A little way from the road, at one point, we came upon a man who was cutting down a large oak tree. As soon as I caught sight of his shining axe glistening in the sun, and realized what he was doing, I was seized with sudden alarm, and exclaimed:

"Stop, John! We must wait until it is down!"

"It will fall away from the road," said John. 'Don't you see that he is cutting it with that object in view?'

"But I was not reassured, and although I am not at all a nervous woman, I called out in a sharp, quick voice to the horse:

"Whoa, Major!"

"The well-trained animal came to a standstill, and the man who was chopping arrested his blows, stepped back and shouted, 'Go ahead; this tree will not fall your way.'

"Even as the words reached us there was a crushing sound, a tremble in the boughs of the great tree, and behold, it was falling directly towards the road, and so near us as it crashed down that some of the twigs of the wide-spreading branches brushed old Major's head.

"No one spoke a word. Son John handed me the reins silently as he stepped from the sleigh, and, taking the woodman's extra axe, helped to clear a way for us to pass. A half-hour later, as our horse was led carefully under some of the huge limbs from which the branches had been cut, the woodman said reverently and humbly, 'The tree was rotten to the core. I did not suspect that. I think, ma'am, the Lord told you to cry "Whoa" in that sharp voice, for, don't you see, if you had not I should have been crushed as well as you, for the tree went over so sudden and so unexpected there would have been no chance for me to dodge. All the time I have been trimming out a way for you I have been saying over to myself, "Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." And not one of the two sold for a farthing fell to the ground without the Father's knowledge, you know.'

The old lady wiped her eyes and her glasses, and then added slowly as she tied on her gingham sun-bonnet, "I think that incident was what made a believer of John."—*Christian Weekly.*

JOHNSON had the honest courage to say to Hannah More, "I cannot take a little, child; therefore I never touch it. Abstinence is as easy to me as temperance would be difficult." There are many less able to resist temptation than was Johnson, who would fear to make such an acknowledgment even to themselves.—*Alliance News.*

THOSE who give wine to children should read the *Lancet*, which says:—"There are few subjects on which medical authorities are more agreed than in thinking that children are far better without any form of alcoholic stimulant. The beverage at all children's entertainments should be non-alcoholic."