



The Family Circle.

WHERE THE CHILDREN SLEEP.

MRS. GEORGIA HULSE M'LEOD.

A mother knelt at sunset hour,
Beside a new made mound,
Only two graves could she call hers
Midst hundreds scattered round.
"Full twenty years ago," she moaned,
"My baby fell asleep
And here I came, day after day
By his low bed to weep."

"So beautiful my darling was,
That strangers turned again,
To look upon his bonny face,
So free from sin's dark stain.
I thought no sorrow was like mine
With empty arms and heart,
I prayed to die, but still was left
In the world's crowded mart."

"Oh, foolish mother, God knew best,
My baby safe, He keeps,
But, woe is me, where is the soul
Of this my boy, who sleeps?
Here, just one little hour ago,
They laid him 'neath the sod,
How blessed I should be to know
He too was safe with God!"

A poor weak Absalom! my son,
I scarce can make it true,
With victims of the dark rum fiend
That they have numbered you.
How bright, and brave, and true you were,
Ere drink its work begun,
Only a sad and shattered wreck
When the foul work was done."

"Two graves, my graves, my baby boy,
My son to manhood grown,
And other mothers like to me,
Make this same, sad life, moan!"
* * * * *

Oh men with fair and happy homes,
How long shall these things be,
Before you roll away the stone,
And let our sons go free?
—Baltimore, Md., Union Signal.

NEW YEAR PLEDGES.

BY CONTENT GREENLEAF.

It was a very serious question which was undergoing discussion in Ruth's cheerful bedroom, one morning, about a week before New Year's day. In this council of three, as in every larger body, there were different degrees of interest shown, a warm enthusiasm, a languid indifference, and a firm opposition. Faith, as usual, was quietly pleading her cause, brave because she knew she was right; the girls had long ago pronounced her a visionary philanthropist, but were always ready to be benefited by her love for helping others. Ruth was not quite so sure; in truth she was always open to conviction upon any subject, and frequently congratulated herself that she had friends to think for her. Gay had her mind quite settled; in fact it always was settled upon every point, from the most desirable shade for a new ribbon to the most knotty point in political economy or politics. She now expressed herself, with a very decisive tap of her boot heel on the fender.

"I never could do such a thing, girls, never—it is only one of Faithie's impossible schemes, not in the least practical. It sounds very plausible, everything does when judiciously stated; but when we come to actually do anything of that kind it is a very different matter from planning it. Most assuredly, it is officious and unladylike to try to force our own views upon others in this way. You know how I feel on the temperance question, but I cannot expect others to adopt my opinions, and I am not in favor of taking advantage of an occasion when we show hospitality, to try to force my convictions upon them," and Gay settled herself in the big arm-chair, as if she felt better after taking so decided a stand.

There was a pause after this emphatic statement, for the two listeners had no reply ready, and were a trifle unsettled in

their conviction by Gay's decided manner; earnestness and decision carrying weight, even in a cause of doubtful value. These three young ladies, or "girls," as they called themselves, were now out of school; and consequently were allowed to give considerable time to the social enjoyments of their little town. They were great friends, and found many subjects upon which they wanted to compare notes, so that visits were frequently exchanged. This year they were, for the first time, to receive formal New Year calls, and had decided that the pleasure could only fully be enjoyed together. Many were the consultations held about dress, flowers, refreshments and all the multiplicity of other cares, with which the feminine mind delights to burden itself. To-day it was a subject of graver importance that had called them together, and the morning was slipping away without their coming to any decision.

"What does your mother say, Ruth?" at last asked Faith, "and what did you tell her?"

"Yes," exclaimed Gay, "let us hear how this scheme sounds when stated plainly, free from Faithie's earnestness; she is entirely too persuasive to state any proposition fairly."

"For shame!" exclaimed Ruth, "Well! I told mother that you accepted her invitation to use our parlors on New Year's day, and she was much relieved to think the house would be open without any responsibility on her part. I told her just how we expected to manage the table and everything, no wine of course, and I explained that Faith proposed we should have an album ready and ask for the autograph of every caller; that on the first page of the album we should have a short pledge written, and all who were brave enough to favor us with autographs bound themselves to abstain from any drink that would intoxicate."

"Pledged for one year," added Faith. "Oh! yes, I told her if we had the pledge we would make it for a year, because then so many more would be willing to sign; she said she thought it was rather an innovation but might do. She gave her consent freely, trusting to our judgment not to do anything unwise. Papa said he thought it might be just as well to make the pledges for all time, although we might get only a few names; but a few pledges for a lifetime are worth a great many promises made for only a year."

"Oh! no," said Faith earnestly, "there are so many of our friends who do not know that they are in danger. If they would only stop and think, only have a year to consider, they would see their peril. And it is not an evidence of weakness to be unwilling to bind ourselves for a long time; we always like to try a new plan before we adopt it. So many have stumbled into sin and are hardly aware that they have done so. If they get back into the right path for a year there is hope for them. It is not the experienced temperance workers that we want to bind tighter, but we want to get the attention of the undecided and thoughtless."

"That sounds very reasonable, Faith," said Gay, thoughtfully, "but who, for instance? I can not think of any one who is so weak as not to know his danger."

"Ah! that is the trouble, the ones who are beginning to drink moderately, taking a glass only occasionally, are the ones of whom we would be least likely to hear; we may help where we least expect to do it."

"Did your mother say anything else, Ruth?" asked Gay.

"She said something about our being liked and seemed to think it would not give offence."

"That is another thing I thought of," said Gay, "I know if we carry out such a plan, so many will think it quite proper because our parents stand well in society here; and are we not taking an advantage of those who have a regard for social distinctions?"

"No," said Faith, "I think it is only using for good one power bestowed on us. If social standing enables us to do anything of this kind we are not justified in standing back as we otherwise would."

"Your arguments are quite overpowering, my dear," said Gay rising and wrapping her shawl around her. "Come, we must go, and let Ruth get at her music."

So the two friends took leave, and as they walked toward home, Faith renewed her conversation with better hope of success because there was only one to convince. She used sometimes to say that it would not be impossible to convince the world of any truth

if the world could be taken one at a time. "You will think of it seriously, please, Gay," said Faith.

"Now, Faithie, I have thought of a compromise. You and I are going to receive calls at Ruth's, you have the album and ask for as many autographs as you please; I will give you mine, but do not ask me to take any active part."

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Faith, "that would never do, I am quite willing to take any amount of work, and bear all the blame of failure, but I must have the weight of your influence, I need you to countenance the plan. I have never forgotten Miss Foster's illustration to show how much more we might accomplish through united efforts."

"What was that? dear, patient Miss Foster was so bountiful with her advice all through our school-days, that I have never been able to sort up her wisdom and label it for future use."

"She used to say, 'What if each little drop of water in the Falls of Niagara would think, 'I am so tiny and insignificant, it surely is not important that I should go down, I am so small my weight is almost nothing. Suppose half the individual drops could think the same, and act upon it, what a weak failure there would be instead of grandeur; but all unite and go down with a plunge and what a power it is. Now, Gay, I believe all that Christian people have to do to work a reformation, is to come down, each with whatever weight of influence he or she has. It may be influence gained by learning, wisdom, or goodness; perhaps it is only the influence of the one more which goes toward making up a majority; but, whatever it is, they ought to come down.'"

"I'm convinced against my better judgment," said Gay laughing; "go on, Faith, and I will uphold you in anything, or rather come down, if you prefer so to express it, and with a cheery 'Good morning,' Gay turned towards her home.

New Year's morning dawned bright and clear, and at an early hour the three friends met to give the finishing touches to the already tastefully arranged parlors; flowers bloomed in pots on mantel and bracket, almost making one forget that their season was so long past. On an unpretending little table, in the bow window, lay the book which had been the cause of so much anxiety, a good-sized autograph album, handsomely bound. The first page was tastefully decorated with a wreath of forget-me-nots, the work of Gay's skillful hands; here was written the pledge, which was the result of some thought on Faith's part:

JANUARY 1st, 1881.
We, the undersigned, do hereby promise to abstain from the use of any intoxicating drink, for one year. May God help us.

It was Gay's wish that the wording of the pledge should be very simple, explaining that she had an aversion to seeing a simple statement buried in a weight of words; a promise was a promise, just as surely if it only consisted of "Yes," as if it was composed of a multiplicity of statements.

Friends began to come early, and the first experience was a trifle discouraging, but not a disappointment. Mr. Simmons, whose lavender gloves betrayed the man of fashion was the first caller; he was easily entertained and seemed reluctant to leave the merry group. It had been decided that Faith should be the first to ask for an autograph, this she did in few words, and was greeted by the inevitable, "Aw! indeed," followed by "Ah! quite unique. I see you have not yet been favored, so really, ladies, you must excuse me." And he bowed himself out.

Faith's disappointment was lost in amusement at Gay's indignation at the rebuff; "Quite unique, indeed, afraid to sign his name first, that is always the way with shallow minds, so much afraid of getting out of the ordinary rut."

Many callers followed, a large majority signed, and varied were the motives which led to their doing so, the minister's ready acquiescence and his cordial: "This is encouraging, to see you carry the temperance question into social life, may you be blessed in this effort," was a strong contrast to the hesitation of one young school friend, who colored deeply as he handed back the book, saying, "I don't half believe I can keep it, but I will try."

"And this," said Faith, gravely, pointing to the last few words of the pledge, "is our assurance that you will not try in vain." Some signed because they felt under obli-

gation to the young ladies for hospitality shown in the past, others because they did not want to appear disobliging; one, because, (as he afterward said), "It seemed to be the thing to do," one or two, because they could not resist the appealing look from Ruth, and were willing to do even greater things to win her favor.

Several had never before been asked to sign a pledge; they did not belong to the class who frequent temperance meetings, and would have considered it a rudeness for any one to have thrust a pledge before them. They were not even moderate drinkers, but might have been called occasional drinkers. To some it was a revelation that young ladies of culture, who wore fashionable clothing, and could entertain well, were really interested in a reformation so often associated only with age, staid manners, and rather dull prayer-meetings.

But even with so much encouragement, Faith was not quite satisfied; the one for whom she had watched all day so anxiously did not call.

Ralph Emerson had married Faith's only sister but three years before, and already had appeared the shadow of that cloud which darkens so many households. It was not a trouble which could be told of, or with which a friend could openly sympathize. Oh, no! anyone would have scouted the idea of Ralph's being actually drunk—so coarse a word could hardly be used in connection with so polished a gentleman, and yet—Faith knew too well the secret of her sister's heavy eyes and failing spirits; and as she greeted her brother-in-law rather late in the afternoon, it was with a sinking heart that she noted his flushed cheeks.

"A long call, ladies, because my last one," he said, gaily; "I have reserved my greatest treat for the last."

For more than half-an-hour he lingered, and still Faith lacked courage to make the request, which devolved on her, the others being engaged. At last, rather hesitatingly:

"Ralph, I want a New Year's autograph, may I have it?"

"Certainly, my most amiable sister."

"But there are certain conditions attached—see!"

He read the pledge slowly, then closed the book impatiently.

"So this is a trap set for me?"

"No, Ralph," said Faith earnestly; "believe me, I meant no offence. We have asked every one who called to-day, and see the names."

He glanced through the book; his friends most of them—and surely in so goodly a company he would not be ashamed to see his name; not one reformed drunkard among them; a few he knew would often take a social glass, but if they had now debarred themselves for a year from that enjoyment, why not join them?

After ten or fifteen minutes' hesitation, during which, with ready tact, Faith was seemingly occupied in another part of the room, he took the pen and hastily wrote his name; then, as he had an abrupt "Good-bye" to the girls, to Faith he said aside:

"We will not discuss this; no words, remember; I have a special aversion to scenes."

How deep was Faith's thankfulness! As the girls sat around the fire late that evening, and discussed the day's pleasure; Ruth counted the names and triumphantly announced the number.

The names, as written, might be quickly counted, but who can estimate the result of this one act of the girls, the power of the mighty wave just set in motion, the real, earnest thoughts started, the good resolutions formed, the possible evils checked, because taken in season.—Church and Home.

NEVER THOUGHT.

"Come now! We don't want any teetotalism here! Do we? it spoils all the fun. You're not really afraid of a glass? (Confidentially aside.) Perhaps we'd better not press him."

The sneers that pass around are unendurable, the insinuation stings to the quick, the line is crossed, the tempter is the victor, the wine taken, and—

At the evening parties this winter one bright face will be missing, and the one who had been forward to sneer, will have to say, "It would have been better not to press him—he blames me, I expect, but I never thought of it."