

FAMILY CIRCLE.

Life.

Two things there are we have no voice in choosing—
Our ancestors nor our existence here,
Fate's mandates here admit of no refusing
From prince or beggar, sinner, saint or seer!

Time leads us onward through the world's deep mazes;
No horoscope forecasts our end or way;
The keenest thought within the world that blazes
Cannot elucidate beyond to-day!

We see the footprints of those gone before us;
The heights attained; the ledge where sons fell;
Anon we catch heaven's chimes, sweetly sonorous,
Or hear a plaint from sin's own citadel.

Our work goes on. We fancy we can fashion
A structure fair, and beautiful, and grand!
We often fail! God can but have compassion
Upon the heart that owns a feeble hand.

I can but think the rudest life work given
Has hidden in it one fair, polished stone;
Smooth, perfect, beautiful—as seen from heaven—
Though sunk in chaos, with rank weeds o'ergrown.

Enough, 'twould seem, if, with each gift extended,
We add our fraction to earth's highest good,
That we may whisper, when our life's expended,
Though poor my work, I did the best I could!

—Housekeeper.

PRIZE STORY.

Dr. Marston—A New Year's Story.

BY FLOSSIE GRAHAM HAWTHORNE P. O., ONT.
(Original.)

The January night was bitter cold, with a clear sky above, and moon and stars shining brightly. Doctor Marston sat before the fire. He was a young man of about eight and twenty years of age, with a pleasant and good looking face of florid complexion, and, as yet, unmarried. He sat, this freezing winter's night, with his feet resting upon the brass fender, a medical book in his hand, and a pipe dangling from his mouth. The contents of the book did not seem to entirely enchain his attention, for every few minutes he would raise his eyes and glance up at the clock on the mantle. The clock struck twelve. "Midnight," muttered the doctor aloud. "The men are fully an hour behind their appointed time. What can delay them?" The words had scarcely left his lips, when the bell pealed loudly. Dr. Marston laid down his book upon the table. He unlocked and opened the front door, and beheld two men standing before him in the clear moonlight, carrying between them something long and heavy, which was concealed in a canvas bag. The two men immediately entered with their strange burden, and Dr. Marston followed them into his private room. They laid the heavy canvas bag upon the long table, which stood behind a green baize curtain that was hung by rings on a brass bar running from one end of the room to the other. Without uttering a word, the men slowly drew off the great bag covering, and a human form, rigid and half nude, was disclosed to view upon the table. "The fellow said to the last that he was the wrong man, sir," exclaimed one, winking his eye. "Said and swore that he was innocent. He died like a man, sir." A moment later the two body bearers bade good-night to the physician, and were out in the cold street. Marston, having bolted and locked the door, returned to the room, and, having pushed the green baize curtain aside to the walls, stood looking at the form upon the table, with his hands clasped behind him. The body before him was that of a man of perhaps thirty years of age, well formed, and with a fine featured face, which even death could not rob of its manly beauty; but a dull blue circle stained the skin of the neck, where the noose of the hangman had pressed, and lightened, and yet the eyes, closed and unswollen, gave to that dead face the appearance of calm repose. A dark murder had been committed eight months before. For the crime a man had met a murderer's fate upon the scaffold that same morning, and there he lay, this night, in the room of Dr. Marston, for the unfortunate man had been poor and utterly friendless in life, and so in death the body had found its way to where it now lay. For a few minutes the doctor stood silently looking at the corpse, and then he turned upon his heel, walked over to an open chest of drawers, and drew out his box of instruments. He took up the candle, set it beside the box upon the dissecting table, and, rolling up his sleeves, opened the box and drew forth a long, slim and short-bladed knife. With the first gentle touch of the knife upon the cold body, the young physician started suddenly back a step or two, and, dropping the knife upon the floor, stared at the body before him. A slight shiver had passed through the form upon the table, and the eyelids were trembling even now. Marston comprehended the truth. The man was not dead. The doctor immediately set to work to revive the man, whom the world believed had died upon the scaffold that same morning. His efforts were soon rewarded, for within twenty minutes a living, breathing being sat upright on the long table and swallowed the brandy that Marston held to his lips. "A live man!" said he, in a husky voice, as he gazed about him, and then fixed his eyes upon the doctor. "Thank God I was not buried alive!" Marston shuddered. "You will not give me up to the cruel law again! You will not leave me taken back to prison! My God! will you not be merciful!" "You were found guilty of murder, Robert Jones. You were brought to the scaffold to-day, and, by a most clumsy mistake, were cut down before life had entirely left your body. By giving you up to the justice from which you have for a time escaped, I only do an imperative duty," said Marston. "As I am now a living man, as there is a heaven above, I am an innocent man!" cried Robert Jones, fervently. "I never committed the deed of which I am accused, never, never! I was condemned upon evidence which was purely circumstantial, and no murder rests upon my soul." Something in the look of the man, something in his voice and manner, caused Marston to think that, after all, this being might be the victim of circumstantial evidence. "Don't give me up," pleaded Jones. "Don't let them kill me in earnest. Give me my freedom. Allow me to leave this place a free man, and the mercy which you will show an unfortunate man this night shall ever remain as close a secret with me as it may with you. You may live to bless the hour when such mercy was shown me; for, if the old saying that 'murder will out' was ever a prophetic one, it shall be in my case, Doctor. I say again, I am innocent man; and the time will come when you and all the world shall be firmly convinced of the fact." "I will be merciful. I do not know why it is, but I am strangely forced to believe your declaration that you are an innocent man. I have an old suit of clothes here. Arise and dress yourself, and let the coming of another night see you upon the ocean. Remember faithfully the belief I had in you, and never abuse the mercy thus shown you." The man, descending from the table, knelt upon his bare knees before the young doctor. The clock struck the hour of two in the morning as a man, wrapped up almost to the very eyes, passed out from the warmth and shelter into the fierce coldness of the silent street, and Dr. Marston, sitting before the fire, asked himself, again and again, whether he had done right or wrong in allowing that man to go forth free.

Seven years passed. It was New Year's day. In the high room of a miserable, poverty-stricken old house, situated in a narrow, dirty street, not far from the waterside, a man sat by the bedside of his wife and child. The woman and child were asleep, and on their thin, pinched faces the stamp of poverty was plainly discernible. This haggard looking man, who sat there gazing at the two beings upon the bed, was Dr. Marston.

Six years before he had married, and, thinking that a splendid opportunity lay before him to make money and reputation in a distant city, the young doctor, with his wife, had set forth full of the brightest hopes. But, before the passage of four years, misfortunes came thick upon them. The money acquired by the practice of his profession was one day swallowed up in a speculation which had held out a bright promise of success. He was penniless. Sickness came upon his wife and child, and the doctor found himself a ruined man. Back came all three, husband, wife and child,—the two latter still ill and suffering. Without money, and, consequently, without friends, Dr. Marston and his family took lodgings in the wretched old house. Mrs. Marston awoke and looked at her husband. "You have returned," she murmured in a whisper, lest she should awake the sleeping child. "Oh, have you succeeded, dear?" "No, Emma darling," answered her husband, his eyes dim with tears. "I have not succeeded; the friend whom I helped with money in my prosperous days refused to lend me a single dollar." The wife dropped her head upon the pillow, and a flood of tears came to her eyes. "Heaven help us, William this New Year's day, when all the world but us is happy," she sighed. "God aid us and our child. Oh, how want and poverty are thrusting us down." Marston bowed his face in his hands, and sat silent and almost despairing, while his wife sunk once more into merciful sleep. Half an hour passed, and, at the end of that time, a low knock came at the door, and the doctor opened it, a man entered the room, and he was muffled up so closely that hardly more than his eyes could be seen. "You are Doctor Marston?" he said, slowly. "Yes, I am," replied the physician. The man suddenly caught the hand of Marston and shook it warmly. The strange man's next movement was to draw out from under his cloak a small tin box and folded newspaper, both of which he handed to the wondering doctor. "Before you open the box, sir, which is not locked," said the stranger, "you must read the marked piece of news on the first page of that paper. And now, Dr. Marston, good-night, and good-bye." Laying the box upon the table, Marston hurriedly opened the paper, at the first glance beheld the article, and, with a beating heart, read the following piece of news:—

"A Dying Man's Confession.—Hiram Wood, an aged man, passed away last evening, and two hours before that event he made a terrible confession. In this confession he declared himself a murderer; said that he alone was the man who committed the dark deed some seven or eight years ago, and for which crime a young man named Robert Jones died upon the scaffold; sent there by what then appeared to be the strongest circumstantial evidence."

The newspaper fell from Dr. Marston's quivering hands, he pulled open the tin box and saw a folded sheet of paper lying on the top of something firm and heavy, and this is what he read:—

"DEAR DOCTOR MARSTON.—You are now convinced that the man who swore to you that he was innocent, seven years ago, spoke the truth; I glory in the thought that in this, your dark hour, I can be of service to you. In the tin box you will find the sum of ten thousand dollars—a present from him who owes you his life. Blush not to take it, for it was all procured honestly. As much more money is at your disposal. When the morrow comes, I shall pay you and your family a pleasant visit, when we can chat together and be joyful."

—From your life-long debtor,

"ROBERT JONES."

The contents of the box were emptied out upon the table. Dr. Marston instantly awoke both wife and child to hear the happy tidings.

The sick wife and child of the doctor rapidly recovered, and Marston became a rich and prosperous physician.

Our Library Table.

"The Domestic Monthly," New York; \$1.00. Bright and readable as usual; one of the best household magazines, beautifully illustrated, and indispensable in every home.

"Good Housekeeping," Springfield, Mass.; \$2.50. A neat, well printed home periodical, containing everything needed for home reading, and always reliable authority on those subjects.

"The Home-maker," \$1.00; Minneapolis, Min. Ever welcome is this little monthly, containing good reading for all, from grandma down to the children.

"Jenness Miller's Monthly," N. Y.; \$1.00. This journal, devoted to woman's dress reform, is certainly wielding a great influence in that direction. The last number contains a cleverly written article upon the subject, accompanied with many illustrations of reform dress.

"Our Dumb Animals," \$1.00; New York. Such publications cannot fail to have a good influence over the young and thoughtless, as well as the matured.

"Ladies' Home Journal," \$1.00; Philadelphia. Truly this journal is all that is claimed of it. The articles are all readable. The instructions for fancy work most explicit, the receipts reliable, and the remainder all good.

"Grip's Almanac," 10 cents. Abounds in fun and good-natured jokes, with numerous comical illustrations.

We have received a copy of the Quarterly Illustrator. It is full of interesting illustrations selected from all the great illustrated periodicals, with a list given of the names and addresses of the artists; 25 cents single copy; 92 Fifth Ave., N. Y.

The Christmas number of the "Home-maker" is a charming one, printed on good paper, and well illustrated; Union Square, N. Y.

Concentrated Lye Soap.

All fat and grease from the kitchen should be carefully saved, and should be made into soap by the following method before accumulating and becoming offensive: Boil for six hours ten gallons of lye made of greenwood ashes, then add eight or ten pounds of grease, and continue to boil it. If thick orropy, add more lye, till the grease is absorbed. You can know when it is absorbed by dropping a spoonful of the melted soap into a glass of water; if grease remain it will show on the water.

If hard soap is desired, put one quart of salt in half a gallon of hot water, stir till dissolved, and pour into the boiling soap. Boil twenty minutes, stirring continually, remove from the fire, and when cold cut in cakes and dry. A box of concentrated lye may be used instead of salt, as it will obviate the necessity of using more dripped lye to consume the grease. *Home Magazine.*

MINNIE MAY'S DEPARTMENT.

MY DEAR NIECES:—

If the woman who is at all dissatisfied with her limited sphere after reading of the broader and higher sounding occupations of other women, would only take into consideration these facts: That it does not need other women's chances to do heroic deeds. Why, she is doing them every day, though it never occurs to her that those commonplace deeds—duties she may call them—are often fraught with much that is noble and heroic. Does the moral training and physical care of children count for nothing; duties that cannot be shirked or left for anyone else to do; the daily plans for the comfort and amusement of children; the never ceasing demands upon time and attention of household matters, and all these accomplished at a sacrifice of health and often physical suffering, for the constant wear and tear on the dear old mother must eventually tell upon her physical forces. Why should not every woman keep a record of her labors—a diary would hardly do—but keep a book and enter therein every garment she makes, every one she mends, every stocking and sock and mittens she knits, every broken heart and bruised nose she patches up for the children during the day; every siege of measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, sore throat and cut finger she nurses; not to mention all the little prayers and hymns and stories she teaches; the bread, cakes, pies and buns; to say nothing of the ten hundred and ninety-five meals she plans, prepares and cooks, and often extras. Surely these do not count for nought, as the busy brains and weary limbs of the tired woman will certify. If any nieces would only begin the year by keeping an accurate record in any entry book of work actually accomplished, it would surprise them to know what an amount they have turned out, and to others it might prove they might have done more.

To make home dearer,
And dark skies clearer,
And bring Heaven nearer,
Is woman's work.

The dark, stormy days of winter are especially trying upon children, often being kept in the house from sickness, severity of weather, or other causes, and with nothing to amuse them. To mothers, this is especially trying. She has her usual duties to do, besides the extra work of the children, always noisy and often fretful with the restraint imposed upon them. Some hints may be of use to those who do not live within easy access of stores, or whose means are limited to such an extent that toys cannot be afforded. The piece-bag, a strong spool of thread, needles and thimble, will furnish enough to keep the most restless child quiet for many an hour. Dolls are the delight of every little girl's heart, and such "lovable" ones can be fashioned from cotton and stuffed with wool, eyes painted with a little blue button, the nose pinched and stitched into place, and a little mouth made with a bit of red thread, hair can be furnished from raveling threads of any brown or black woollen stuff, then dress the dollie, adding stockings cut from an old pair, and a little pair of boots of bright flannel or crocheted with bright yarn. All these may be done at odd minutes—if a mother ever has any—and kept for a surprise when most needed. For boys, it is more difficult to furnish amusement, if they are not old enough to read, but I have found a supply of acorns a boon to children. Shew them how to make soldiers, by sticking a little flag in one and placing them in long lines, but pray, my dear niece, do not allow the little ones to do this on the floor; give them a small table or a tray on a stool, never on the floor. Elephants, horses, dogs, cats, mice, rats, indeed nearly all the animal kingdom can be fashioned out of cloth and stuffed with wool. Gay looking birds can be made the same way, and a flat feather sewed on or glued on for wings and tail. Pretty little boats, too, can be made from shingles, and sails and mast added, to pull about with a string. For the baby a soft ball of bright crocheted yarn will keep him quiet in his high chair; or a rattle can be made of an empty pill box, with a few pills in it, covered with cotton or cloth, and a hard roll of cloth added for a handle. Each mother should study the tastes of her children, and try to furnish amusement for them in times of necessity. Do not expect the poor wee things to sit about and amuse themselves all day or days, as often happens during these winter days; shew them how to play, and they will easily take to it. Scrap books are an endless source of amusement to both boys and girls. Collect the pictures at your leisure, and any old book will do to paste them in. A cupful of flour paste and the stiff quill of a goose wing will do for a brush. Need I go on, my dear nieces? These few hints enlarged upon will secure you many a leisure hour, and give your children a taste for occupation which will, perhaps, tell for their benefit in the years to come. MINNIE MAY.