



The Family Circle.

HOEING AND PRAYING.

Said Farmer Jones in a whining tone,
To his good old neighbor Gray,
"I've worn my knees nigh through to the bone,
But it aint no use to pray.

"Your corn looks just twice as nice as mine,
Though you don't pretend to be
A shinin' light in the church to shine,
An' tell salvation's free.

"I've prayed to the Lord a thousand times
For to make that 'ere corn grow;
An' why yourn beats it so, an' climbs,
I'd gin a deal to know."

Said Farmer Gray to his neighbor Jones,
In his easy, quiet, way;
"When prayers get mixed with lazy bones,
They don't make farmin' pay.

"Your weeds, I notice, are good an' tall,
In spite of all your prayers;
You may pray for corn till the heavens fall,
If you don't dig up the tares.

"I mix my prayers with a little toil
Along in every row;
An' I work this mixture into the soil
Quite vig'rous with a hoe.

"An' I've discovered, though still in sin,
As sure as you are born,
This kind of compost well worked in
Makes pretty decent corn.

"So while I'm praying I use my hoe,
An' do my level best
To keep down the weeds along each row,
An' the Lord, he does the rest.

"It's well for to pray both night and morn,
As every farmer knows;
But the place to pray for thrifty corn
Is right between the rows.

"You must use your hands while praying though,
If an answer you would get;
For prayer-worn knees an' a rusty hoe,
Never raised a big crop yet.

"An' so I believe, my good old friend,
If you mean to win the day,
From ploughing clean to the harvest's end,
You must hoe as well as pray."
—*Christian Leader.*

ACCEPTED FACTS.

BY ALICE C. JENNINGS.

I.

"Everything is against me!" This despairing exclamation came from the lips of a young lady of twenty-two, whose surroundings would not seem to warrant such depression unless one remembered that bright surroundings do not always ensure brightness of spirit. It was a clear October afternoon, and the sun was deepening the gold of a walnut-tree just outside the window, and sending a rich glow over the crimson furnishings of the room where she sat. But it brought no reflected light into the face of Helen Carlton. Her expression was as gloomy as that of Jacob could have been when he uttered the lament which she had unconsciously repeated.

"Why, Helen, how wretched you look this afternoon! How can you be so blue this glorious day?" said a cheery voice at her elbow.

"It may be glorious to other people, but it is not to me," was the response, as Helen glanced from the healthy form of her cousin, Mabel Edwards, to her own bandaged limb and the crutch at her side, which proclaimed her a partial cripple.

One year before, she had herself been as strong and vigorous as her companion. But a sudden fall had lamed her for life, and time has brought neither resignation nor patience. So much did she brood over her misfortune that it was really injuring her health. Well-meaning friends, too, instead of trying to turn her thoughts to other matters, were apt to condole with her in a way that made it all the more prominent, so that she really came to feel that she had nothing left.

"Why shouldn't it be glorious to you, I should like to know? You have as good eyes to see it with as I have," replied Mabel.

"But I cannot go out as you can. When father was alive I could ride, but now he has gone, and everything has gone with him," said Helen, disconsolately.

"Not quite," said Mabel, glancing around the well-furnished apartment. "You have a comfortable home, a devoted mother, and a brother who is ready to draw you about for hours if you wish him to."

"Yes, but that does not make up for not being able to walk. I can never attend school again; I cannot bear to go to church and be watched by the whole congregation; I must give up the gymnasium; I can have no place in society; I can never—" here Helen broke down, but Mabel understood. She knew that her cousin's fall had terminated a happy and suitable engagement, Helen herself having firmly refused to indict a crippled wife upon any one.

"How is Bertie to-day?" asked Mabel, thinking to change the subject.

"Cross as a bear. I can never please him. He wants me constantly, and never thinks that I am weak and cross myself. There's his bell now," and Helen took up her crutch and limped out of the room, to attend to the invalid brother whom a combination of brain and nervous troubles had rendered a great care to her mother and herself.

"Oh dear!" sighed Mabel, "I wish I could help Helen. What was it I read this morning about 'accepted facts'? Ah, here it is"—and taking a little book from her satchel, Mabel read: "Accept the facts of life as they are, and make the best of them. Change what you can, and do not worry over the unavoidable."

"Well, Helen doesn't accept the facts of her life, that's certain. Let's see if I can teach her to make that maxim practical. But first, I'll find out the rest of her troubles."

So, when Helen returned, Mabel easily drew from her the story of further trials,—of the sister-in-law who had estranged her oldest brother from her mother and herself; of the mortgage that had not been paid, and the consequent lines of care on her mother's face; and of the fear that their pleasant home must be given up, now that two of the family were incapable of increasing the family income. Common trials, all of them; but apt to seem very large when the thorn-prick, instead of being contemplated in some one else, is felt in our own flesh.

"Well, your case is a hard one," said Mabel, sympathetically. "But I do not see that you can help any of these things, or that you are to blame for them. Now let's take them just as they are, and see if we cannot find a bright side to them."

II.

"How bright you look!" was the salutation of another of Mabel's friends, a year later, as she found Helen watching the gold of the walnut-tree from the same crimson-covered easy chair in which we saw her at first.

"I feel bright," was the response, as she laid down the book she was reading. "This study is such a diversion to me, and I am learning a great deal more in the Correspondence College than I ever did in school."

"I am helping others, too," she added, taking up a letter written in a cramped and uncertain hand. "This girl is far worse off than I am, and she says I have taught her how to live."

"But you are just as lame as ever, are you not?"

"Yes, and my lameness is very hard, but it is not the worst thing that could happen. I have still my eyes, and ears, and brain, and hands. Using all these, I do not so much miss my feet."

"Do you not miss the gymnasium?"

"Not as much as I did. I limp over there once a week, and really enjoy the exercises almost as much as if I could take part in them."

"They say you really go to church every Sunday."

"Certainly. Why not? I do not believe people watch me half as much as I used to imagine, and supposing they do, what difference does that make? I go to worship God, and the service means so much to me now that I forget everything else."

"Is Bertie any less care than he used to be?"

"No, I cannot say that he is. Poor boy,

he cannot help it, suffering as he does. I have to take him as he is, and not expect him to be bright. Then, you know, I have one brother who is a thorough comfort. There was never a boy more devoted to his mother and sister than John is to us."

"How about Louis?"

For the first time a shadow passed over Helen's face, but it was only momentary. "Well, she answered, cheerfully, "he has to be accepted, like other facts. Mother often says that Lucy, by estranging him from us, is doing more injury to herself than she possibly can do to any one else."

"Has that mortgage been paid yet?"

"No, and I do not see any hope of its being paid at present."

"Then you may have to give up your home."

"Very likely, but we shall not separate. Love and tact and hard work can make a much smaller home attractive and comfortable."

"Well, I cannot see that a single one of your trials has grown less, and yet you are a thousand times more cheerful than you were a year ago. Do tell me the secret?"

"There is no secret. It is only what any one, by a little effort, can do in any position. I have simply accepted the fact that trials are inseparable from earthly existence, and ceased to consider it a 'strange thing' that so many have fallen to my own share. But I have also learned to accept the bright facts of life, as well as the dark, and to take thankfully every bit of sunshine that comes, or can be made to come, by opening my heart to it. We are apt to think that we ought not to enjoy anything while our loved ones are suffering, but I cannot see that it is selfish to take what pleasure we can, and thus allow them to feel the reflex influence of our own joy. Do you think it would really help Bertie if I should spend my time in sighs and tears on his account, instead of taking the daily out-of-door exercise, and the daily hour of study which give me physical and mental strength, and put me in better condition to care for him?"

"Then, too," added Helen, laying her hand tenderly on her little Bible, "I have found precious facts to accept here. The facts of redemption and resurrection and heavenly joy. The facts that God is my Father, and Christ my Saviour. In such hands I must be safe, and ought to be happy, whatever comes."—*New York Observer.*

LITTLE EDITH'S MESSAGE.

A TRUE STORY.

BY CHARA BROUGHTON CONANT.

In a quiet chamber from which the sunshine had been carefully shut out lay a pale young mother, almost too weak even to raise her hand. Her eyes were closed, but now and then her lips, still scorched with the fever that had wasted away her strength, moved as if in silent prayer.

Only the night before her faithful physician had told her that there was no longer any hope, and that her life was fast ebbing away. With sweet submission, with unflinching confidence in the Saviour whose child she was, Mrs. Hamilton, received the news. Feeling that she might be too weak to take leave of her loved ones on the following day, she had summoned to her bedside her heart-broken husband and their only child, a little girl of nine years.

She took leave of them separately, and Edith listened to her mother's parting words of love and tender counsel, her little heart almost too full to speak. Though very childish in some ways, she was uncommonly thoughtful and mature in others. After kissing the dear sufferer good-night, she went to her own little room adjoining, furnished so prettily by those dear mother-hands. She did not give way to a burst of unreasoning sorrow, as many a child or older person might have done, but sat there lost in thought, with a dreamy, far-away expression in her soft dark eyes, pondering something that her Sunday-school teacher had said a few weeks before. Thus she sat for a long time, and then kneeling by her bed, poured out her childish heart in supplication for her mother. Her mind was full of something she wanted to say to her, and though she knew she must not be disturbed again that night, it seemed as if she could hardly wait till morning.

Night passed and the morning came, a

lovely April morning, with an unclouded smile upon its face. But the young mother lay in the twilight atmosphere of her sick-room, white as the pillow upon which her head was resting. She had taken leave of her dear ones, the last words of tender love and counsel had been spoken, and now her thoughts were withdrawn from earth and she was simply resting in the Everlasting Arms, waiting till they should bear her through the heavenly gate.

Somebody opened the door softly and beckoned to the nurse, who stole noiselessly across the room. A few whispers were exchanged, and then the door was softly closed. The nurse stole to the bedside and said gently, "Mrs. Hamilton!"

"Yes!" said the patient feebly, as she unclosed her eyes. "What is it, nurse?"

"Little Edith is very anxious to speak with you, ma'am," said the woman in the same subdued tone she had used before, "and it's hard putting the child off. Do you feel able to speak with her a few minutes?"

"Let her come in," said the mother faintly, for she thought, "The dear child has something on her mind, perhaps, and may feel easier after she has spoken it out to me."

Edith stole softly in, and Mrs. Hamilton made a sign to the nurse to leave them alone together. Then she feebly stretched out her wasted hand to her darling, and Edith, clasping it in her little one, stood silent a moment, gazing with her large soft eyes at her mother. She was small of her age, with a quaint, attractive little face, around which clustered her sunny brown hair.

"You had something to say to me, darling?"

Edith drew a little nearer. "Mamma," she said, her eyes still fixed wistfully upon the dear one's face, "I've heard of a story in the Bible about a woman who was dreadfully sick. She had a great many doctors and she spent all her money on them, but they hadn't done her a bit of good, only made her worse. But, mamma, she'd heard of Jesus, how he cured sick people, and she set out to find him. There was a great crowd of people round him, but she just dragged herself through them, for she was most too weak to walk, and when she got close to Jesus she put out her hand and touched the hem of his robe. And, mamma, she was cured right away."

"But, Edith," said the young mother, laying the tiny hand she held tenderly against her cheek, "mamma is weak, so weak that even if Jesus were in Brooklyn, if he were right out there on the avenue, she wouldn't have the strength to drag herself to him if she tried. She would be too weak to be carried to him, even."

Edith hesitated, then sweet and eager came the answer: "But, mamma, I've heard that you can always touch Jesus by the prayer of faith!"

How that appeal thrilled through the mother's heart! After the little one had gone out she lay pondering over her words. The prayer of faith! Was she so weak that Jesus could not raise her up even now if he wished? And then from the heart that had fancied the last cord loosened that bound it to earth, went up the childlike prayer, "Lord, even now, if it be thy will, restore me to my dear ones!"

Hours stole on, and slowly, slowly the shadow lifted. A sweet comfort had been planted in the mother's heart, and ere long a gentle healingsleep stole upon her. With mingled joy and trembling she was watched by those who loved her, for they scarcely dared to hope that she was to be restored to them. But the joy grew brighter and brighter till its first pale glimmer of dawn was merged in the glorious sunshine.

Who shall say that the little child was not Christ's messenger sent to breathe words of hope and encouragement to his daughter who lay there so helpless, so submissive to his will?

And oh! would that to some soul seeking spiritual healing of the Saviour this little sketch might bring a word of help and cheer. No longer does he walk the earth as of yore, but still is he close beside us, sensitive to the slightest touch of the hand of faith, weak and trembling though it be. And to the confession of the timid but loving believer comes ever his gracious response, "Be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."—*American Messenger.*