

THE FAMILY CIRCLE

HEALTH AND INSTRUCTION AMUSEMENT CHOICE LITERATURE

JOURNAL OF

EDMUND GOSWELL & CO. LONDON

VOL. V.

LONDON, ONT., JANUARY, 1882.

NO. 7.

THE TWO GATES.

A pilgrim once (so runs an ancient tale),
Old, worn, and spent, crept down a shadowed vale:
On either hand rose mountains bleak and high;
Chill was the gusty air, and dark the sky;
The path was rugged, and his feet was bare;
His heavy eyes upon the ground were cast,
And every step seemed feebler than the last.

The valley ended where a naked rock
Rose sheer from earth to heaven, as if to mock
The pilgrim who had crept that toilsome way;
But while his dim and weary eyes essay
To find an outlet, in the mountain side
A ponderous sculptured brazen door he spied,
And tottering toward it with fast-failing breath,
Above the portal read, "THE GATE OF DEATH."

He could not stay his feet, that led thereto:
It yielded to his touch, and passing through,
He came into a world all bright and fair:
Blue were the heavens, and balmy was the air;
And, lo! the blood of youth was in his veins,
And he was clad in robes that held no stains
Of his long pilgrimage. Amazed, he turned:
Behold! a golden door behind him burned
In that fair sunlight, and his wondering eyes,
Now lustreful and clear as those new skies,
Free from the mists of age, of care, and strife,
Above the portal read, "THE GATE OF LIFE."

[Written for THE FAMILY CIRCLE.]

THE LAST REQUEST.

By J. F. L.

"Come near to me Anna dear," said Lena Milbrook, as she lay bolstered up in her snowy bed, "I want to have a long talk with you, for it will take a good while to say all I want to, for it tires me to talk much at a time."

Obedient to the summons, Anna came quickly to the bedside of her suffering sister, and after kissing her affectionately gently stroked back the tresses of her dark brown hair.

"You will soon be better Lena, I trust," she said, "and we will go out to the groves and pluck the wild flowers, as we have done for so many years, and sing as we did when we were girls:

'Flowers, wildwood flowers;
Do they not tell of heaven.'

"Ah no, Anna. Something tells me the wildwood flowers will speak to me no more of heaven. Before the violets shall thrust their sweet blossoms above the green sward, I shall be

'Where fragrant flowers immortal bloom.'

"Anna, do not weep. It does seem hard sometimes to

die; not because I fear death, nor dread the ordeal on my own account; but it is hard to leave the dear ones to whom my heart clings with all the tender attachment of a wife and mother. And you, my dear sister, dearest of all except my husband and my two little ones, to you are the love-cords attached that bind my soul to earth, and make me shrink from the final summons."

"Do not fear for those you love," said Anna, as the tears gathering in her eyes betrayed the emotions which she vainly endeavored to suppress, "God will take care of them. But surely you will soon be better; the bright spring-time will stir the blood in your veins, and awake the vital forces to new energy, and when the roses bloom again, the lost bloom will return to your cheeks, and you will live to love and bless the circle of your friendships for many years to come."

"O no, Anna, do not try to keep me up, or build up your expectations on false hopes. I know that my work on earth is done, and these little ones whom God has given me must be nurtured by other hands, and trained and taught by some kind friend for their future position in life; but who will act the part of mother toward them when I am gone. O! Anna, I know of no one so good and true as yourself and none to whom I could commit their training with so much confidence that they would be well cared for and educated, and kept from the paths of sin and folly. Will you not be a mother to them when I am gone, and do for them as I myself would do? Promise me this and I will die content."

"My dear sister," Anna replied, "I will cheerfully do all that lies in my power for the welfare and happiness of the children, not only from a sense of duty and the love I bear to you, but also from the attachment I feel for the dear little ones themselves, but I need not tell you that it may not be in my power to do for them as I would feel disposed to do if I were otherwise circumstanced; but I am sure, if it must be that you be taken from us, God will provide for them."

"You say, 'if you were otherwise circumstanced.' Anna, I trust if Robert Milbrook asks you to keep house for him for a while after I am gone you will not refuse. This much perhaps you will feel it to be your duty to do, and I trust you will not allow the whisperings of tattlers and scandal mongers, which are sure to come, to influence you to do otherwise. Let the consciousness of your own rectitude of purpose, and the approval of Him who searches all hearts sustain you in your course of action independent of the opinions of others,—and listen, Anna, you know when Robert came to pay his addresses to me at first, it was hard for us to say which he admired most, you or me, and I have often wondered why he asked me instead of you to marry him. I know he was strongly attached to you, and I am equally certain that the more mature acquaintance of the few years that have intervened since then, while it has not shaken his fidelity to me, has not lessened his admiration for you, and I know too that you have always entertained a sincere regard for him, though, as in duty bound, your love for him has been purely sisterly; but when I am gone, as I trust, to the home of the blest above, it would add to my happiness there, if I might know that the sisterly were changed to the wifely affection, and that