

The Family Circle.

MIDSUMMER.

Why rail against the radiant summer sun
Because it beats too harshly on some days.
Because it brings not joy to every one,
Nor peace, nor comfort to all human ways,
I cause with sudden potencies it beats
Upon the city in death-burdened heats?

What season of the year has not its sting?
Winter is glorious, yet may freeze the heart;
There is subtle poison in the breath of spring.
And autumn harbors an envenomed dart:
Each has its charm, each feels its own desire,
As every soul its own imperious fire.

These days of summer are so rich with bloom,
So sweet with perfumes of the flowers and trees,
So wonderful with starlights hazed in gloom,
So full of mystery on melodious seas,
So tender, dreamful, with bird-haunted noons
And songs of soft winds under yellow moons.

That we who live them with love-lighted souls,
Gather their sweetness to ourselves and grow
Beyond the commonplace of common goals,
Beyond the dull restraints that all men know,
And we are thrilled with a divining sense
Of love and its supreme omnipotence:

Now earth seems like a garden where our thought
Blossoms anew in fresh and tender guise,
Where beauty has the power of life full wrought,
And youth sees far with wide, enchanted eyes,
And where the air is scented as it flows
With fragrance of the jasmine and the rose.

—George Edgar Montgomery, in *Harper's Weekly*.

OPPORTUNITY.

Miss Abigail Meeker walked up the gravel path to the porch with the western exposure, on which was seated her friend, Mrs. Brewster.

"How d'ye do?" she called as she drew near. "I don't wonder you like to be out doors. I thought there was a real chill in the house, which is no more'n's to be looked for late in September. But when you get out in this mellow sunshine—my!"

She panted as she seated herself, giving a pleased glance about her.

"Well, I've said it time and again, and I say it yet, that if there's no place that seems to get more of the real fall tints than another, it's them maples o' your'n. Look at them reds and purples. Solomon in all his glory, sure enough."

"Abigail," said her friend, and the tone brought Miss Abigail's eyes at once to her face to meet a look which caused a sudden cloud to fall on her own.

"What's the matter, Jane?"

"Has there been anything hear'd from Susan Pettit?"

"Not as I know of. I didn't know anybody expected to hear from her."

"No, that's it." Mrs. Brewster set her lips and shook her head.

"What is a troublin' you, Jane?"

"Do you know when she was expected home?"

"Why, no. I don't know as anybody knew. Did they?"

"I suppose not. That's it."

"What on earth's the matter, Jane? You fairly make me creep, lookin' so woe-begone. What is it? Anything wrong about Susan Pettit? I didn't know you knew her well enough to take it hard if there was."

"Yes, there 'tis again—I didn't," said Mrs. Brewster in a deeply pained voice. "Abigail, wasn't her initials S. J.?"

"Like enough they was. Let me see—yes—I remembered wonderin' what the J. stood for when she put down her name for a quarter on the subscription paper to send Jerry Day to the hospital. Susan Pettit never give much, but what she did give she always give willin'. But what—"

"Have you seen this?" Mrs. Brewster held up a copy of the weekly edition of a newspaper in the nearest large city.

"No!"

"An awful railroad accident. One car jumped right into another and crashed people's lives out. A dozen killed and plenty more wounded. Now listen: 'Killed, S. J. Pettit.'"

The two neighbors gazed into each other's eyes.

"Couldn't it be a mistake?"

"It ain't a common name. 'Twas a train—see—" Mrs. Brewster leaned over with the paper and pointed to some lines in the short chapter of the tragedy, "comin' this way. That was why I wanted to know if you knew when she was a-comin'. But—" Mrs. Brewster's voice broke in a sob, "nobody knew."

"You don't mean it," said Miss Abigail, taking the paper with a little air of desperation. "I can't believe it. Dead! I can't seem to sense it. Such a chipper little creatur she, in spite of her lameness. Always had a pleasant word and a smile for folks, and all the children loved her. Well," with a tremble in her voice, "if I had to do it over again I'm free to confess I'd do different by Susan Pettit."

With another huge sob Mrs. Brewster covered her face with her hands and cried.

"All the time that woman's lived here amongst us," she presently began, "I've had it on my mind that when I got around to it I'd try to make things a little easier and pleasanter for her. How long is it since she come?"

"Six or seven year, I guess—"

"Yes. And there was some of us that felt to lay it up agen her that she was niece of old Jacob Hart that was always suspected of that mortgage fraud. And when she came here to take care of him when he was dying and then lived on in that little mite of a house he'd left her, why—if I haven't done a neighbor's part by her—which I haven't—may the Lord forgive me!"

"You needn't talk," said Miss Abigail. "Many and many's the time I've went by there and see her settin' alone lookin' out in such a kind of a piteful way—like she was lookin' for someone to come in and be a little sociable with her. I thought I hadn't time, and I hadn't—much—but I might 'a' made time and been none the worse for it. Oh me! it was an opportunity, and now it's gone from me. She was a stranger and I didn't take her in."

Left to herself an hour later, Mrs. Brewster sat face to face with her lost opportunity, and with every thought the sting of self-reproach grew deeper.

"She was so poor and I didn't hold out a hand to her. I might have stopped for her as I drove by to church, when I knew she was often kept to home by her lameness. I meant to send her apples and things, and I didn't. I thought sometimes of sending her my religious paper when I'd done reading it—and I let the time slip."

There was a shiver of excitement as Miss Abigail Meeker passed through the village on her way home, telling her startling news.

Does any life go out among us—poor human procrastinators that we are—with-out leaving behind its train of bitter thought of what we might have done and did not do? Of the words which might have been spoken to ears now closed; of acts which might have brought comfort and cheer? May we be pitied in our aching for a sound from dumb lips in acknowledgment of blessing which should

have been bestowed—in our craving for time, time, time in which to do the thousand and one things which never now can be done!

More than one turned with dimming eyes towards the window from which the patient face had looked out.

"I meant to carry some of them flower seeds to her. She'd have liked 'em—she set such store by flowers."

"I could 'a' stopped and ploughed up her bit of a garden as well as not."

"Why didn't I invite her to my quilting?"

"I might," "I could have," "I meant to," "I wish I had," "Why didn't I?"

Miss Susie Pettie was brought home to the little house for the funeral. Crushed and broken—the plain sealed coffin borne reverently among those to whom the awful thing came as the excitement of a lifetime. Hysterical sobs and wailing were heard as flowers were piled over the still form.

"I didn't bring one of 'em," said Mrs. Brewster, pointing to them in half-indignant agitation. "No, I didn't. I've read a piece of poetry about laying flowers on folks' graves, and—" Mrs. Brewster choked—"never laying deeds of loving kindness onto their lives. And have you read the piece about her in the paper? All about the sweetness and loveliness! Queer, hain't it," with a gasping laugh, "that nobody seemed to find it out till—. No, you don't catch me carrying flowers to her grave. They might 'a' comforted her livin'."

The house was shut and locked after the funeral, its closed blinds bearing a mournful look to those who passed. It was said that it had fallen to a distant connection of Miss Susan, but no one knew certainly.

Three weeks later an unpretentious, shabby-neat little figure left the afternoon train and walked with limping steps up the street of the small village, followed by wide-staring, wondering eyes.

"Hey?"

"That ain't Susan Pettit?"

"Well, if she wa'n't dead I'd say it was."

"But she's dead."

"I don't care—it's her, anyways."

Miss Susan went quietly up to the door of the little house, still dreary with its closed windows, took the key from her pocket and opened it.

"It was all a mistake," she said, her face beaming in appreciation of the cordiality with which the amazed neighbors crowded about her. "I wasn't hurt a mite, but they got names mixed up. And I didn't try to set things right because, you see, there wasn't anybody it would make any difference to except the folks belonging to the poor soul that was dead. And they don't know yet who it was in that—Ah me!"

Miss Susan shuddered at the dreadful memory.

"Oh, Susan, it does, it did make a difference!" cried Abigail Meeker, wiping her eyes. "Where have you been all this time, as it seems pretty sure you ain't been in Heaven?"

"I've been with a lady that got hurt. I took care of her that night"—Miss Susan closed her eyes with another nervous shudder—"and the next day, when she came to, nothing would do but I must go with her. She's gettin' well now, so I come home."—*N.Y. Observer*.

WHAT IS EGYPT?

What is Egypt? Is it a great farm? an unrivaled archaeological museum? a delightful health resort? a valuable naval stronghold and place of arms? an important centre of Mediterranean trade? In truth, it is each of these things and all together, even to the most casual and cursory glance of the most irresponsible and indolent holiday-maker. But what it is not to him—and herein he takes courage from the thought that neither is it to those ninety-nine out of every hundred Europeans who have longest and most carefully studied it—Mr. Wilfrid Blunt being the hundredth—the home of a nation.

If there is one fact which seems to stare him out of countenance whichever way he turns—one fact with which the present and the past alike confront him; which meets him in the tomb and the temple, in the river, meadow and bazar, which looks at him out of the eyes of pictured Pharaohs, and of almost as mute and monumental fellahs; which takes voice and motion in the many-colored chattering crowd of Cairo, and which is almost audible in the very silence of the desert itself—it is that Egypt is a land without people.

It has an aboriginal race of cultivators as much a part of the soil as its palm trees; it has an infinitely mixed community of settlers, the deposit of successive conquests, permanent in the sense in which the desert sands are permanent, but no more to be built upon than they. From time immemorial the beautiful country has been the spoil of every ravisher who was strong enough to seize and hold her—Ethiopian, Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, Roman, Arab. Every rising or risen power upon her borders, European, African or Asiatic has in turn possessed her, and, as its strength declined, has, in turn, been forced to yield her up to a stronger hand. To the chief States of the world she has been all that her famous Queen was to successive masters or competitors for the mastery of Rome.—*The National Review*.

THE SECRET OF BEING AT EASE.

The secret of being at ease wherever you are is a very simple one. It is only this—Do not think about yourself. Bashfulness, awkwardness, and clumsiness are caused by what we call self-consciousness, and as soon as we entirely forget our selves these pass away. A girl who writes to me complains that she is so tall for her age that she cannot help being awkward. "The moment I enter a room," she says, "I look about to see if any other girl is as tall as I am, and I am always the tallest—a perfect bean-pole. Then I fancy everybody is sorry for me, and I cannot fix my attention on anything which is going on. It makes me quite wretched. What shall I do?"

In the first place, my dear, your height, if you carry yourself well and hold your head up, is a great advantage. Far from being a thing to regret, it is something to be glad of.

Tall or short, fat, and dumpy, or thin and pale, let the young girl never think of this when she meets her friends. Instead, let her try her very best to make the rest happy. If there is a girl in the room who is a stranger, or who seems not to be having a pleasant time, single her out and entertain her. Your hostess will be pleased with this sort of unobtrusive help, if it is kindly given.—*Harper's Round Table*.