

Family Reading.

A MOTHER'S PRAYER.

Father of Heaven, our strong Defence,
My children see;
Thou Who hast given them to me,
And ta'en their earthly father hence,
Keep them in Christ-like innocence,
And lift their hearts to Thee!

Dear Saviour, everlasting Son!
My only boy
Is on my heart a care and joy;
Teach him, like Thee, his race to run,
And for Thy glory, blessed One,
His talent to employ!

O Elder Brother: may Thy love
The sisters twain
Keep pure from every earthly stain!
Send down Thy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
Truth, hope, and joy in Thee to prove,
And in Thy grace maintain!

O Triune God, by faith confessed,
My children three
I long to consecrate to Thee,
That finally, Thy mercy blest
May bring them to Thy perfect rest,
Eternal Trinity!

OUR NELL.

CHAPTER X.

"Jack, I've got a word to say to you before you go," said Mr. Masters, one morning, a few days after Carry's arrival. Breakfast was over, Jack had a holiday from school, and the boys were escaping from the room with alacrity. Jack came back slowly.

"You're a deal too much with that young Upwood," continued his father; "he's not a fit companion for any lad of mine. Do you hear Jack?"

Jack twisted his coat-button and fidgeted uneasily. "Give me your word that you'll have nought to do with him," Jack still fidgeted, and answered nothing. "You'll not go from here, my lad, till you do, so you'd best be quick about it."

Jack glanced at his father, and then at Nell. His father's face was grim, and Nell's attention was occupied in packing the teacups on the tray. The spirit sank within him, and the words on his lips died away. He had meant to say, "I've promised to go with him up to Quarry Farm to-day, and I can't back out of it now. But instead of these bold words came only a sheepish, "Very well, father."

A moment after, he was out of the room, and then he found himself in a difficulty.

Dinner time came, but no Jack. Various surmises were entertained respecting his non-appearance, but Nell alone discovered the truth.

Bobby was the soul of loyalty where his elder brother was concerned, but Jack had not seen fit to take him into his confidence on this occasion, and as Nell was washing his face for dinner he revealed the fact that Jack had the day before announced his intention of going with Jim Upwood to his uncle's farm. Nell enjoined silence upon Bobby, and said nothing herself.

At four o'clock in the afternoon she happened to be alone in the kitchen, toasting a tea-cake for tea. The latch of the outer door was lifted softly, and a pair of keen inquiring eyes, beneath the rough head of hair, peered cautiously through. Nell gave a look, and seeing that—as she expected—it was Jack, turned to her toasting again, and vouchsafed him no greeting, for wrath had been burning within her all day. Finding that Nell was alone in the kitchen, Jack came inside, and shut the door behind him. Then he said in a subdued tone—

"Nell, I've been with Jim Upwood."
"Yes, I know," said Nell.
"How did you know?"
"Bob let out."
"Is father very angry? What's he going to do to me?"
"Father doesn't know. I left it for you to tell him. You'd better go this minute."

"Where is he?"
"In the parlor."
Jack took two or three steps forward, and then stopped, with an exclamation of pain.

"Nell," he said, "I've lamed myself."
"Well, you can't expect much pity," said Nell, still without looking round. "I suppose you're not going to be a coward, as well as a liar."

"I'm not a liar, and I'm not a coward either," said Jack; but his tone belied the boldness of his words.

"Yes, you are a liar, if you give your word you won't do a thing, and then go straight and do it; and you're a coward, too, if you're afraid to go and own it."

"Nay, I'm none afraid; but, Nell, my foot hurts so bad."

"It's not so bad but what you can have it out with father first. I'll see to it after."

At this moment Carry came up the passage from the parlor, and heard Nell's last words as she entered the kitchen. At the sight of Jack she gave a little scream, and cried, "Oh, Jack! what have you done to yourself?"

Nell turned round hastily, and then flinging down the toasting-fork and teacake, she flew across the kitchen. Jack's face was white and drawn with pain, and he was steadying himself against the table, while he kept off the floor one shoeless foot, the sock of which was soaked with blood.

"Oh, Nell," cried Carry, "how could you speak so cruelly to the poor boy?" and she stooped down to examine the wounded foot.

But Nell without a word, put her arms round Jack, and carried him to the arm-chair. Then she fetched warm water, and kneeling down began gently to sponge off the sock. Carry stood by the chair and held the boy's hand.

"Now tell us how it happened, my poor Jack," she questioned; and then he told them how at the Quarry Farm he had been sliding down a haystack, not seeing that a pitchfork, handle downwards, was reared against the side, and one of the prongs had gone into his foot. Jim Upwood had wanted to ask his uncle to send him home in the gig, but Jack would not hear of it, and had started to walk home; soon, however, a queer faintness and giddiness obliged him to give in, and he sat down under the hedge, and he did not know how he should get home; until at last whom should he see but William, with the cart, on his way from the mill, and so he came back with him.

During this recital, Carry and Jack were surprised to see that tears were running down Nell's cheeks. Carry wondered that Nell should be so unusually soft-hearted, and Jack wondered she should seem sorry for him when a few moments before she had been so angry. When the operation was concluded, and the foot bound up, Jack took hold of Nell's arm, and drew her towards him.

"Eh! never thee mind," he whispered; "it's not awful bad. But, I say, d'ye think father'll forgive me?"
"Yes," answered Nell, emphatically. Then she said to Carry, "Look to the tea-things, will you? I'll be back in a minute."

Carry looked after her as she went out of the kitchen, and wondered what she what she was going to do, for her carriage indicated purpose within.

Nell walked into the parlor. Her mother was there, knitting, and her father sat in his arm-chair.

"Isn't the tea ready?" asked her mother. But Nell did not hear her. She went up to her father, and said—

"Father, Jack's been with Jim Upwood, and I've told him you'll forgive him."

Mrs. Masters uttered an exclamation, laid down her knitting, and watched her husband anxiously.

"And why did he leave you to come and tell me this?" asked he, in a severe tone.

"He was coming himself, but he can't walk; he's hurt his foot so bad."

Mrs. Masters did not wait to hear more, but made haste to go to her boy.

Mr. Masters also rose, but with so stern a look that Nell's heart sank. She caught his arm as he was passing her, and there was a sob in her voice as she cried—

"Oh! father, father! I said you would forgive him."

Her father stopped, and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Why, Nell! why, Nell!" he said, wonderingly. "Nay, my lass, I'll not be hard on the lad."

Nell threw her arms round her father's neck, and kissed him passionately.

The same evening Derwent came down from the vicarage, to renew his chat with Mr. Masters, and a little curious also to observe the new element which Carry's advent had brought into the household.

Jack was established in the old horse-hair sofa in the parlor, and with his foot in the easiest position—relieved from the dread of his father's displeasure, and, even, indeed, feeling himself, under the women's petting, something of a hero—was fast recovering his usual easy flow of spirits.

Nell was the only member of the family from whom the cloud had not yet cleared. Jack's conduct had weighed upon her mind all day. It had included treason against his father, and the meanness of deceit, and from both these sins her soul revolted. Nell's first impulse towards the sinning was to be hard and contemptuous; her second usually was to be hard on herself. The revulsion had come in this case with more than ordinary suddenness. Remorse for her own severity, and the dread of her father's, had brought down her spirit to a low ebb. She was seldom moved, but emotion once aroused, equanimity was not regained easily.

She contrasted strikingly with Carry. Her eyes were red with crying, her hair and dress were suggestive of forlornness, and her manner was taciturn and abrupt. Derwent was sorry to see his little friend, as he now regarded her, out of spirits, and tried to make her laugh and talk as usual; but Nell's mood was persistent. In the window sat Carry, neat and gentle and composed, with some light work in her hands. Bobby sat on a low stool at her feet, and the two made a pretty picture. Bobby was for the present devoted to his charming new sister. When Derwent came up to the window, he was seized on by the child and begged to go and see a family of kittens which the farm-yard cat had just presented to the world, and deposited in a bed of hay in the cow-house. Derwent readily consented.

"Carry, you come too," cried the child, pulling at her dress.

"Nay, I'm sure you can do without me, Bobby," said Carry; but Bobby persisted, and Derwent said—

"You can't be so cruel as to refuse, Miss Masters! Evidently Bobby can't do without you."

"Ah, I am a novelty, you see," she said, looking up and smiling. "Well, then, Bobby, since I must go, fetch me my hat."

As the three went out of the room together, a sharp pang shot through Nell's heart.

"How silly!" thought she. "Surely I can't be so mean as to feel spiteful because Bobby makes a fuss with her."

Outside the cow-house the twilight was gathering; inside it was nearly dark. They entered by a door at the end, which led into a narrow passage lined with hay, and separated from the stalls by a low boarding. The gentle inhabitants of the place were housed for the night; but all was still, save for the occasional clank of a chain, echoing up into the cobwebbed rafters, as the cow put her head over the boarding to gaze with large mild eyes at the intruders. In the dusk, the place was to Bobby full of mystery, half charming half dreadful; and even his elders unconsciously walked closer together, and spoke softly. Right at the end, in the darkest corner, lay the kittens—three little soft balls in a warm nest of hay.

Derwent took a white one up, and

gave it to Carry. In doing so he touched her hands; they felt soft and warm. "It is just like you," said he, impulsively.

He repented the words directly. Would she be offended? Nell would have been.

But Carry was not offended. She smiled and lifted her white lids, so that Derwent saw her eyes shining like stars in the gloom.

(To be continued.)

Children's Department.

WHAT CAN LITTLE CHILDREN DO?

What can little children do?

Little preachers of the Word,
Can those tiny, dimpled hands
Labor for the blessed Lord?

Little hearts can beat for Him,
Thinking how He blessed them;
Took them in His arms of love,
And smiled as He caressed them.

Little lips can speak for Him,
Careful that no naughty word,
And no harsh and angry tones,
Only loving ones, be heard.

Little feet can run for Him,
Carrying comforts to His poor;
Gentle messengers of love,
How they'll bless you o'er and o'er.

Little children, love the Saviour,
Strive His blessed work to do;
Then among the "many mansions,"
One He will prepare for you.

ILLUSTRATION OF GRACE.

"He shall sit as a refiner of silver" (Mal. iii. 3). Some months ago a few ladies who met together in Dublin to read the Scriptures and make them the subject of conversation, were reading the third chapter of Malachi. One of the ladies gave it as her opinion that the fuller's soap and the refiner of silver were the same image, both intended to convey the same view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ; while another observed: "There is something remarkable in the expression in the third verse: 'He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.' They agreed that possibly it might be so, and one of the ladies promised to call on a silversmith and report to them what he said on the subject. She went accordingly and, without telling the object of her errand, begged to know the process of refining silver, which he fully described to her.

"But, sir," said she, "do you sit while the work of refining is going on?"

"O yes, madam," replied the silversmith. "I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace; for if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree the silver is sure to be injured."

At once she saw the beauty, and the comfort, too, of the expression: "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

Christ sees it needful to put his children into the furnace; but he is seated by the side of it. His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying, and his wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random; the very hairs of their head are numbered.

As the lady was leaving the shop the silversmith called her back and said he had still further to mention that he only knew when the process of purifying was complete by seeing his own image reflected in the silver. Beautiful figure! When Christ sees his own image in his people his work of purifying is accomplished.

It is the tiny streamlet which is kept in a splutter, by a stick thrust into its waters.