



The Family Circle.

TALKING IT OVER.

—BY L. G. WARNER.

Five little people had been to walk,
Some one way and some another,
And at night, as they toasted their ten little feet
Round the fire, a voice that was always sweet
Said, "What did you see? Tell mother."

Then Tom, by birthright, began: "I heard
The merriest sleigh-bells ring,
And there was the least little mite of a sleigh,
And a little bay pony so chipper and gay.
The boy that drove must be happy all day,
As happy as any king."

Next Bess, the brownie: "O, mother, I saw,
In a window so large and clear,
A bird in a cage all gold and blue,
And over and round it long vines grew,
And lovely roses and fuchsias too.
How I wanted it, mother dear!"

And Fan—what caught her longing eyes
Was a wonderful, wonderful doll,
With flowing curls of yellow hair,
And a smiling face so soft and fair,
And a spangled dress as light as air,
Fit for Cinderella's ball.

Then Harry—dear little fat, round Hal,
(Sometimes called Roly Poly)—
What did he see but a gorgeous sled,
With a flying horse in flaming red,
And its name, all yellow, was, "Go Ahead."
"O, mother, I tell you 'twas jolly!"

And now it was Birdie's turn: "Mamma,
I heard a faint little 'kee,'
And there was a dear little, poor little kitty,
Just shivering with cold, and O, so pretty!
Nobody owned her in all the city;
So I've brought her to live with me."

Then mother said softly, "Good night, my dears,"
With whispers of this and that;
And kisses many, for sweet refrain,
Were given over and over again,
Till they all went off with their wishes vain
But Birdie, who carried her cat,
—Wide Awake.

AMY'S PROBATION.

By the Author of "Glaucia," etc.

CHAPTER V.—VAIN RESISTANCE.

Amy did not pay much attention to the reading at breakfast time. She was hungry, and not at all inclined to find fault with the good plain food set before her, but she could see that Milly was dreadfully disappointed that nothing but stale bread, hominy, and porridge was set upon the table. It was a comfort to her to see her sister eat her breakfast with some appetite, and when it was over, and she was summoned to attend Sister Catharine to unpack her trunk, she felt almost happy at the thought of having Florie to herself for a few minutes.

"My darling, how did you sleep?" she whispered, slipping her arm round Florie's waist, as they followed the lay sister to the box room.

But Florie had been told that such endearments, even between sisters, were against the true obedience taught here, and she seemed half afraid of Amy's demonstrative affection.

But Amy was too pleased to notice this now, and they had soon reached the end of the corridor, and pointed out which was their trunk to Sister Catharine, who was waiting to receive them.

The box was soon unlocked, and Amy, who was determined to unpack for herself, was kneeling in front, lifting the things out, when Sister Catharine interrupted her.

"This is your sister's box, I suppose," she said, pointing to the other trunk.

"No, our things are all together in both," said Amy. "Mamma thought we should have a room to ourselves, and so she packed them as she thought would be most convenient for us. That trunk is half full of books."

"Books!" uttered the nun; "you do not want books."

"O, but we do," said Amy, and then she proceeded to lift out a pile of clothes and hand them to Florie. "Those are yours, dear," she said. "Will you take them to your room?"

"Put them down, Miss Florence. I must give out your clothes as you need them, and you do not need all these at once," said Sister Catharine, and she came to the side of the trunk to inspect what Amy was lifting out. "You only need one garment of each sort," she said, as she lifted one from the pile Amy had laid out.

Amy stared as the nun put these aside, saying, "These can go back in the trunk again."

"May we not do as we like with our own clothes?" demanded Amy.

"Yes, certainly, Miss Curtis, but you are here to learn obedience, and it must be learned in little things first if it is to be practised in greater by and by."

"But—but not to have my own clothes," said Amy, almost crying with vexation.

Florie came to her side to speak a word of comfort. "Never mind, Amy; what does it matter where our clothes are kept? I'm sure I don't care."

"Well, I do, and I don't like it, and I shall write and tell mamma and Uncle John to fetch us home."

Amy quite intended to carry out the threat, and so the further unpacking of this trunk was a matter of indifference to her; but she would have a few books out of the other, she thought, and so, leaving the first trunk to Florie and Sister Catharine, she unlocked the other, and proceeded to lift out first their winter dresses, and then the books that were underneath them.

"It is a pity to touch those books," said the lay sister, who was there to assist.

"I am going to take these to my room," said Amy, lifting out a pile of her Sunday-school lesson books and papers, and placing her Bible at the top.

Sister Catharine calmly laid her hand upon Amy's shoulder. "You are here to learn obedience, my child, and we must have proof that you are willing to learn the holy lesson we strive to teach; and so we make rules that to you may seem strange, but they are wise and good, and we say you must obey them whether you understand or not."

"But what has that to do with my books?" asked Amy, looking from them to the nun's calm face.

"The rule of our house is that nothing but one suit and one set of clothes is allowed in the bedrooms."

"But—but where am I to keep my books, and my desk and work-box?" asked Amy.

"The paper and pens can be taken to your class room, and put in your own desk there. They will be quite safe, and you will always write your letters there. The work-box you have little need for. You may take out a few needles and a spool of cotton, and any thing further you may want I will give you."

"But the books?" said Amy, in a tone of despair.

"They must go back into the box. Put them in at once, Miss Curtis; I have no wish to touch them," said the nun, in a tone which Amy knew she dare not disobey.

"I don't know what I am to do if you take my books away from me," said Amy, almost crying again.

"I do not take them from you. They are in your own charge—in your own trunk; you can lock it yourself and take the key with you."

"May I come here and get the books when I want them?" asked Amy.

Sister Catharine stared as she heard the bold question. "This room is always locked," she said, "and will not be opened again for some weeks, I hope."

"Then I must have my Bible," said Amy, making a sudden dash for it, as the lid of the trunk was about to close.

Sister Catharine set it wide open again. "I must send for the Spiritual Mother, Miss Curtis," she said.

"But why may I not have my own Bible? Everybody believes in that."

"Of course we do," said Sister Catharine calmly; "we prize it so much that we are anxious to teach wilful girls the true devotion the Bible itself teaches."

"Then why may I not have it to learn this true devotion for myself?" asked Amy.

"Because you are not capable of learning it unaided; because, through the mistakes that have been made in its translation, and from other causes, it is not a safe book to be placed in the hands of the unlearned—of any, in fact, but those ordained and commissioned by the Church to teach its true meaning. Did you ever hear it was taught in the Bible that young girls knew better what was good for them than those who, being older and wiser, were set over them?"

"Oh, Amy, do give it up!" said Florie, in a tearful whisper. "I am afraid we have been too fond of having our own way in everything, and would not learn the true obedience, and that is why papa has been taken away."

Amy kissed her sister tenderly, but still held fast to her Bible. "I am not sure that I ought to give it up at all," she said.

"If you have learned anything from it while you have had it, you must know that it teaches young people to obey those who are set over them. I am afraid you have learned little good from it, or you would not cause this unseemly strife by setting up your will against the rules of this holy house."

Amy remembered with a sudden pain the temper she had shown the previous night and again this morning. The nun was right, she thought; she had given little proof of that gentle meekness she had set herself to learn, and, with a downcast look, she placed the Bible in the trunk again, locked it slowly and tearfully, and then silently carried the few clothes she was allowed to retain to her own room.

Florie took her share, and now for the first time the sisters knew where each other was sleeping.

The few clothes were soon placed in the drawers, and then the lay sister took them to the school room.

Once in the school room, and engaged upon her lessons, Amy soon forgot her various causes of annoyance, and felt almost vexed when the bell rang a short time afterward for them to go to the playground.

This was divided into three portions, not by a wall or hedge, but by two paths, and up and down each of these walked two lay sisters to watch that the classes did not mix during play-time. Amy felt disconsolate enough when she saw this arrangement. It had been disregarded the day before, because they had not returned to discipline, but now the rules were strictly enforced, and many of the girls stood about looking wistfully across at friends on the other side of the intersecting paths, or casting angry glances at the sentinels, who were constantly walking back and forth.

Amy stood still, watching Florie walking up and down with her room-mate and another girl. She was looking tearful and unhappy, and the girls seemed to be talking earnestly, but Amy could not hear what was said, but she comforted herself with the thought that this state of things would not last long. She would write to her mother upon the first opportunity, and until she could come and fetch them she must wait, and be as patient as she could.

She thought over all that had happened during the last few hours, and blamed herself very bitterly for the impatience and ill temper she had shown. Sister Catharine might well ask how much she had profited by reading the Bible, when she saw so little proof of its having made her gentle and patient and forbearing. How she wished she might run up stairs now, and pour out her trouble to her Father in heaven, who is ever ready to hear the cry of the weakest of his children. But no one was allowed to leave the playground until recreation time was over, so Amy lifted up her heart in silent prayer for a minute, standing where she was.

She was roused from this the next minute by seeing Milly enter by another door and dash across her own allotment of the playground to her side.

"Amy, Amy, I won't put up with it!" she cried, regardless of all eyes being turned upon her.

"They have taken your books away, I suppose," said her cousin.

"My books and pictures and dresses, and every pretty thing I brought with me, and Augusta told me we were treated like ladies. I call it shameful to treat girls like this," and Milly burst into a storm of angry sobs and tears.

The sentinels on duty evidently thought they had better ignore her presence for a little while, until this had somewhat subsided, and

so she was allowed to pour out her griefs unrestrainedly to her cousin.

It seemed that Milly had been bent upon having the prettiest bedroom in the convent, and had brought pictures and photographs and little brackets and vases, and all these trifles in which her soul delighted had been consigned to the trunks again, Sister Catharine actually making her put back with her own hands those she had insisted upon taking out.

A group of girls had gathered around to hear the outpouring of Milly's trouble, and each tried to say something to soothe and comfort her.

"We all have to go through it in turn," said one.

"Sister Catharine gets used to all sorts of heroics of that sort over the first unpacking," said another.

"You see it is of no use doing either the pathetic or the passionate here, we've all got to be formed on the same model, and we may as well take it quietly, and let the good sisters have their way, for they will have it in spite of everything, you may be sure of that."

"Good sisters, indeed!" repeated Milly, indignantly. "I don't call them good; they are a set of artful, deceitful, wicked women, that's what they are!" and she darted a furious glance at the two placid-looking sentinels who were silently pacing up and down the path close by.

"Hush, hush," said one or two warningly.

"I don't care, I won't hush, they shall know what I think of them before I go—mean, suspicious, hateful things!"

"Come, Milly, don't call names," said Amy. "I don't like the place or the people a bit, but I cannot say that I think them wicked. Everything is so different from what we have ever been used to that—"

"Yes, that's it," interrupted another girl. "Nobody ever likes it at first, but we get used to it, and don't mind after a little while."

"If I could only see Augusta," sighed Milly.

"We don't see much of the novices except in chapel, and those who teach music."

"Who does teach music?" asked Amy; not that she felt very anxious about this now, for she had resolved to write and ask her mother to fetch them away as soon as possible.

"Sister Magdalen teaches some, and one or two of the novices as well. We give a good deal of time to music—at least most of us do," added the girl, significantly.

Before they left the playground to resume their studies the lay sister in charge of Milly's class took care to tell her that such a breach of discipline as she had been guilty of could not be passed over again. Milly only shook herself, however, and muttered something about speaking to her cousin whenever she pleased, a remark that the sister did not forget, although she appeared not to hear it at the time.

Study was resumed again when they left the playground and continued until twelve o'clock; then the girls were marched in single file and the strictest silence to the lavatory, where they might wash their hands and brush their hair, and the rule of silence was so far relaxed that a girl might speak in an undertone to her neighbor—a privilege the girls were not slow to avail themselves of, for the pleasure of hearing their own voices was so restricted they were not likely to let any opportunity slip where they could indulge it. Half an hour was allowed for this washing, and they then marched to the refectory to dinner, the reading being varied for this meal by legends of the lives of the saints being read aloud.

After dinner came recreation in the playground again, when care was taken that no girl should pass the boundary lines, as Milly had done in the morning; for such an example, if repeated, might bring about general insubordination, for the rule was unpopular enough even among the most obedient girls.

At two they returned to the school-room for half an hour's general study under the mistress-general, and then the classes went off to their own special rooms, or the music room.

Amy would have been delighted with her music lesson and teacher any where else, even as it was, it was an hour of almost unmixed enjoyment, for Sister Magdalen was a passionate lover of music herself, and spoke such appreciative words in praise of Amy's few excellences, and pointed out her faults so gently and patiently, that Amy