



The Family Circle.

"Home, Sweet Home."

UPS AND DOWNS;

OR, SCENES FROM LIFE.

(Concluded).

The fleeting years were pleasant to the Claytons. Their children grew up fair and promising. Already Harry was in a solicitor's office, an articled clerk, the younger boy, William, was to be a medical man; and the little Violet was as lovely and modest as her name-flower. And Henrietta had another happiness—they had laid by many hundreds now; and it was not merely the usual interest that was received for them, for Clayton had been admitted to a share, though a very trifling one, in the concern; and the sum, small as it was, that he invested, returned him a percentage far larger than that given to depositors.

But sunshine cannot last for ever. The first cloud was a change in Clayton's health. A severe illness, followed by a stroke of paralysis, left him with his powers of mind unimpaired, but so infirm as to preclude all hope of future exertion. Then what comfort it was that they had so well guarded against an evil day. And what a satisfaction that Clayton had obtained the small share in the banking concern, now that he could do nothing to make an income; and the mere interest of their savings would have been very little for their support. But within a couple of years the bank broke, and all was lost, the trifling share which had seemed such a blessing only serving to make ruin more complete; for he was involved in the liabilities, and the policy of insurance, which had always rendered his mind easy on his wife's account, was taken from them.

Still there were their sons—Harry two-and-twenty and William seventeen—who were eager to exert themselves for their parents and sister. The younger's prospects of course were altered; but a situation in the Custom House was obtained, enabling him to be at once an assistance to the family. And Harry was in high hopes that he should get into practice as a solicitor, for which he was now qualified. He appeared to be doing so for a few months; when an election came on, during which a portion of the hustings fell, and Harry Clayton was carried home, living indeed, but with a spinal injury with which he might linger on for years, but only to grieve over the thought of being a burthen to those he hoped to have supported.

William's small salary was now their only resource. To add to it, Violet went out as a morning governess, though her youth made her reward but trifling. So passed another year, and still Harry, at nearly four-and-twenty, lay a dead weight on the struggling efforts of his young brother and sister, without a hope of recovery or—he would often have said, but for fear of grieving those who loved him—even a hope of death. Clayton retained much of his former cheerfulness, and strove to support the spirits and courage of his son under this painful trial; while for his sake also the fond mother checked her own repinings, and strove to give to their humble dwelling the comfort and the home-look which it formerly wore.

One day the captain of a ship at the Custom House quay came into the Long-Room, as it was called, where William was writing. The captain was transacting some business concerning his ship, and while thus engaged, the clerk he was speaking to asked Clayton by name for a paper that was required.

"Clayton!" repeated the captain. "It is a long time since I heard that name, though I know and like it well. I hope you won't think it curiosity if I ask your father's name?"

"It is Philip Clayton," replied the youth.

"It must be the same—and you are William!" exclaimed the sailor, grasping his hand. "Tell me only that all are well."

A shade came over William's face.

"My father is not in good health, and my brother is ill," he answered, sadly.

The joyful look of the sailor was dimmed also.

"You will take me to see them," he said. "I have often longed for an opportunity; and hoped if ever this hour arrived, I should find no sorrow with those I have always remembered as being so happy."

In half an hour William's duties were over, and they left the Custom House together. Young Clayton did not ask his companion's name, nor did the sailor tell it; though before their walk was ended, his anxiety to know all about his old friends had gleaned almost their entire history from William's ingenuousness. Yet though somewhat prepared, it was a tremulous shock when Mr. Clayton stood before him weak and tremulous, stricken with age before his time; and he saw Harry, the once merry and light-hearted, lying powerless and motionless on a couch, with the light of youth fading from his eye, and his spirit dying out of his bosom.

"An old friend?" repeated Clayton inquiringly, as he gazed intently on the face of his visitor.

"Yes; an obliged and deeply indebted one, and a grateful one too, Mr. Clayton," replied the sailor. "Have you quite forgotten Frank Allen, who owes everything to your kindness?"

"A feeling came over me at first that it could be no other," said Clayton, giving him a cordial welcome, which was warmly echoed round.

An hour swept away all the clouds which appeared to hang over Frank's conduct to his old friends; for he had often written, but receiving no answer, had fancied that Clayton never wished to hear from him; and when, years after, he

returned to the village, he learned that they had left it, and and could gain no further tidings. His own fortunes had been prosperous during the fifteen years which had elapsed since Philip Clayton acted so kind a part to him—for talent and diligence had won for him the favour of all he sailed with; and so he had risen until, two years before, he obtained the command of a ship.

"And now I will not call it chance that brought me to this port," he said; "it was some higher influence guided me here, and told me at once when I heard the name to-day that one of my old friends was near me—though it certainly was not William that I thought of seeing."

"Ah, you would think of me," observed Harry, with a mournful smile. "But my father and mother have but one son to work for them."

"No, Harry," replied Allen, crossing over to the friend of his boyhood, and taking his hand; "they shall have two sons to work for them; and in good time I trust you may join us as the third. But all I owe to your father's generosity—he acted towards me as a father; and deeply grieved shall I be if he will not allow me to be as a son to him. Surely—surely, Mr. Clayton," he continued, earnestly, "you will not refuse to the boy whom you protected—whom your bounty placed in the way of winning far more than a competency—you will not refuse to him the power of proving his gratitude for all you have done for him! To be a son to you and Mrs. Clayton, and a brother to your children—this is all I wish, and it would indeed be to me a happiness."

It was the truest gratitude that prompted the desire, and bade him exert all his eloquence to win, as he did, the privilege of devoting himself as a son to the protector of his boyhood. For Henry especially, his heart was grieved; to see him, young and gifted, wearing away the spring-time of his life in suffering and sorrow, pained him deeply; and he earnestly sought other and better advice upon his case than the Claytons' means had enabled them to command. At length a hope was given that a partial recovery at least might be attained.

With this hope, and the blessings of his early friends, Frank Allen, at the end of some weeks, went on his voyage, happy in the consciousness that he had left lighter hearts than he had found. And when, months after, he returned, there were bright smiles to greet him back, and something of the old light beginning to beam in Harry's eye, for the dreary period of hopelessness was past, and he had the prospect that in another year he might once more tread the green turf and look upon the sparkling streams; and, above all, essay again to support himself, at least, instead of remaining in the helpless and child-like dependence which had so weighed upon his spirit.

The prospect was not deceptive, and before Frank left them next, its promise was in part fulfilled, and young Clayton was able to move about with assistance.

"Philip," said Mrs. Clayton to her husband, as they watched from the window Harry leaning on the arm of the friend to whose aid his recovery was so greatly owing, since it had involved expenses which they themselves could not have met.—"Philip, your fifty pounds were put out to far better interest than all the other money we ever saved; the rest is gone, but this remains to bless us. Little thought I when I so opposed you how rich a return your generosity would one day receive!"

"Nor I either," answered Clayton; "I never thought of nor sought return. But it has come to cheer us in the hour it was most needed; and now, as I look on these two, how it brings back that last evening when Allen and I stood watching our boys; now, as then, his was the helper of mine; and I could almost think the very smile of old, with all boyhood's cloudless joy, was on their faces."

He guessed not yet the cause of those smiles, nor that Frank had just told Harry how his own deep, true love had won that of Violet, and that ere long he fervently hoped to claim by right the titles of son and brother in the family of his adoption.

THE END.

Mr. Brown's Offer.

"I do think it's too bad for anything! The idea of a man I've never seen having the insolence to write to Uncle Josiah that he is coming all the way from out West to ask me to marry him!"

Kitty Clover's blue eyes flashed, and something very suspiciously like angry tears were glimmering on her long, curling brown lashes. Her cheeks were flushed, and her lovely mouth dimpled into a look of scorn and rage that did not at all suit Aunt Susan's view of the case, as she looked over her spectacle rims and took Kitty quite sharply to task.

"I can't see what there is so terrible about it. Brother Josiah and I have known Archie Brown ever since he was knee-high to a grasshopper, and a nicer boy and a nicer man you'll never find than he was and is now. He's good-looking and rich and he wants a wife; and he's seen your picture and fallen in love with you, and he's written to know if Brother Josiah has any objection to his coming to ask you to marry him. We take it as a great compliment, and a streak of luck you wouldn't come across twice in your life, and here you must set up contrary to it and consider yourself almost insulted. Kitty, I'm ashamed of you."

Miss Susan Clover jerked the needle so emphatically that the strong thread snapped viciously. Kitty, perched in the wide, shady window seat, pouted her red lips.

"Well, I don't care—it's a shame! And Mr. Archie Brown needn't think I'll be bought and sold like a cow or pig, just because he happens to have the cash. And I won't have anything to do

with it—now! I know I'll just hate him—yes, I hate him already. When he comes you can tell him my opinion of him."

And then, after she had flounced out of the pleasant sitting-room, her wavy brown hair all a tumble over her low, white brow, her pretty blue eyes all agleam with genuine girlish indignation, her white, dimpled fingers playing furious havoc with her ruffled apron, and Aunt Susan sat chewing away almost as vexed as Kitty herself, thinking what silly fools the young of to-day were.

Kitty went up to her room, and went directly to her dressing-glass and took a long, eager survey of herself.

"Yes, I am pretty, and I don't wonder this horrid Mr. Brown—ah! what a name, Brown! I don't really feel surprised that he has fallen in love with my photograph, and Uncle Joe and Aunt Sue both say he is good-looking—but for all that I perfectly despise him. I've a good mind to just fix myself up as irresistibly as possible and see him when he comes at 8 o'clock, and then pay him for his impudence by completely crushing him. Yes—I will!"

The anger was all gone from the blue eyes now, and the scorn from the luscious scarlet lips, and instead there were gleams of merry mischief and dimpling smiles at prospect of the glorious triumph so near at hand.

"Archie Brown! the idea! but she would be revenged. Oh, is he here already?"

For the one maid-servant of all work in the Clover family was handing Kitty a card, and on it she had read a name that sent warm flushes to her cheeks despite her determination.

"Tell Mr. 'A. Brown' that Miss Clover sends her compliments and will see him presently."

Then she turned to her glass for a parting critical survey, and saw a very satisfactory reflection of a slender, graceful girl, with a fresh, sweet face and blue eyes that were half roguish, half indignant, and a saucy mouth that struggled between the expressions of cold contempt and haughty indifference—a lovely, lovable girl, in a dark blue silk costume, whom it was little wonder Archie Brown, away out in Kansas, had come all the way back to win, if he could.

And he was down stairs—come to bargain with her, come to buy her as he would a load of hay. The thought sent flushes of suppressed indignation to her eyes, and more beautiful flushes to her cheeks, as she went slowly down stairs and into the parlor, her train rustling after in a sort of eloquent protest—to see standing in the bay window, curiously examining a luxurious pot of smilax, a little dumpy gentleman, with a bald shiny spot on the back of his head, and wearing a suit of clothes that were neither especially new nor well-fitting.

Kitty gave a little silent gasp, as she took her rapid survey, with the thought that for this horrid-looking man she had taken so much trouble to dress, so she might have the delightful triumph she planned. This odious, vulgar "A. Brown."

As her train rustled over the carpet Mr. Brown turned suddenly around, showing Kitty a good-humored, middle-aged face, small twinkling eyes behind eye-glasses, and a little bristling tuft of beard on a fat double chin.

"Is this Miss Clover? Ah, yes!"

Kitty bowed friendly.

"I am Mr. Brown."

"So I presume. Will you sit down, or?"

She was about to suggest that Uncle Joe be sent for, but Mr. Brown acted so suddenly on her suggestion, and took a chair so near her, that she was momentarily dumbfounded.

"I dare say you were looking for me!"

Kitty flushed almost painfully at having to admit she had been expecting this, but she was as brave as could be.

"Oh, that is, I thought it very probable you'd come."

"Just so; and when anybody makes an appointment they cannot be too prompt in keeping it. So I'm here, and—excuse me—but I suppose you've your answer ready for me?"

Kitty almost shrieked. An answer for this man! Whatever could Uncle Joe and Aunt Sue mean to have exposed her to such cruel degradation?

"I don't know what you mean," she flashed at him, almost beside herself.

"You don't! Well, now, that's strange. Why, old Mr. Clover understands it all, and he agreed