



The Family Circle.

"Home, Sweet Home."

UPS AND DOWNS;

OR, SCENES FROM LIFE.

"I shall be very happy—won't you?—when we have a little money laid by," said Philip Clayton's pretty wife, as she poured out tea for him in their cheerful little parlor, through whose open window stole the soft breath of summer, laden with the fragrance of the sweet-briar that fringed the grass-plot, and the honey-suckle that draped the rustic porch.

"I am very happy now," replied Clayton, smiling, as he glanced from the fair face that looked on him to the laughing boy who was romping with a spaniel on the grass.

"Well, and so am I," said Mrs. Clayton, smiling also; it would have been strange if she was not happy, with a husband who loved her devotedly, and no sorrow or danger glooming on the sunny horizon of her life. "But you know what I mean—it will be a great comfort and satisfaction when we are able to lay up something as a provision for the future. And think what a pleasure it will be to find the interest coming in at once to help us!"

"No, no!" laughed Clayton; "to carry out the thing properly, we must not spend the interest, but lay that up to accumulate into a large fortune by the time we are three or four score years old. But come, Hetty, let us not concern ourselves so much about a future that may never come. If it does come, God will, I trust, enable us to provide for it; but the blessings of the present are ours to enjoy and be thankful for. So give me another cup, and then let me hear that song you sang me yesterday; it has been echoing in my ears all day; and every line I wrote seemed to be accommodating itself to the tune."

So the song was sung, and others followed, drawing the child dancing in from his gambols to hear the music; and the evening passed pleasantly as it was wont to do, making Mrs. Clayton forget, in the happiness of the present, her anxiety for the future.

Years passed by, and found and left as great and yet greater happiness at the little flower-wreathed cottage—for other childish voices made its walls resound with merriment, and not one blessing had been recalled to leave a shadow on remembrance. Moreover, the cherished wish of Henrietta seemed on the point of being realized; for the first hundred pounds were nearly amassed by their care and frugality out of Philip's salary from the bank where he was a clerk; and already his over-anxious wife reckoned the five per cent. interest in those days given, as the small yet welcome addition to their income which should enable the second hundred to be more quickly collected.

Even Philip knew not how great a hold the desire of providing against contingencies had on the mind of his pretty and amiable Henrietta. His own nature was generous and hopeful; and, beyond doing everything for the best, he did not much ponder over what might be the freight of the coming years, cheerfully trusting that if they brought him misfortune, they would bring him the means and the strength to struggle against it, or endure. He had at the outset, insured his life, which secured some provision for his family, should he be taken from them, and he saw no cause for doubt that his exertions would maintain them comfortably while he lived; and pleasant were his thoughts as evening after evening he walked a mile through quiet lanes, where the trees met and the birds sang sweetly above his head, to the little village where he dwelt among scenes so different from the large town where his occupation lay.

On the other side of the clear stream which glided quietly through the village, stood a house whose inmates had known far less of prosperity than was the portion of the Claytons. Yet there had come a brightness over their prospects; and after many misfortunes, Richard Allen thought that the clouds had passed at length, and the long delayed sunshine was gleaming forth; for a situation as manager of a brewery promised him not merely a competence, but the means of setting his son, a fine boy of fifteen, forward in the world. He had been but six months in his situation, and twice that time in the neighborhood, where he was, of course, but little known, though that little was calculated to win respect; and of all, Clayton perhaps knew and liked him best.

One evening they were leaning over the bridge that spanned the stream, watching Frank Allen as he altered, and worked at, and launched, and guided on its course the little boat which Harry Clayton—six years his junior—was unable to make sail down the stream, and they smiled to see how the child clapped his hands with delight, and how pleased Frank was to aid the ignorance and awkwardness of his little companion.

"Strange," said Allen, "that as men we should lose the feelings which seem inherent in us in childhood and in boyhood. In those years our first impulse is to help those who are weaker or more inexperienced than ourselves. But as time passes, these feelings die away and are forgotten; and how seldom it is that we find men pleased and eager to extend a helping hand to those who are less fortunate than themselves!"

"There are exceptions," replied Clayton, "and I would wish to think they are numerous."

"So would I," said Allen, "and they ought to be numerous; for surely every year of our lives shows us more and more how dependent men are on their fellow-creatures in some shape or another."

"I suspect we need only look into our own hearts to own the truth of that," said Clayton, smiling. "But here comes Mrs. Allen, and I know my good little housewife has been impatiently waiting for us this hour past."

And so she had been; for with all her prudence and frugality, Mrs. Clayton was very proud of her cakes and her preserves, and the Allens were at all times among her most welcome guests. There were but themselves this evening; and long was it remembered at the cottage, and often in after days Henrietta would tell how, when they were going away, Mrs. Allen went back to kiss the children a second time as they slept, and how Mr. Allen said, as he shook her hand, "What a very, very happy evening we have passed!"

She and Philip stood at the door until their friends crossed the little bridge homewards; they watched the crescent moon sink behind the distant hills; and then, closing the door upon the dimmer light which gleamed in starry rays on bough and stream, there soon was rest and silence in the cottage, as everywhere around.

It might have been two hours after when the loud barking of a dog awakened Clayton. His first idea was that it was broad daylight, so bright a light was shining through the window. But in another moment he was conscious that the glow was redder than that of the reddest morning. And springing to the window, he saw flames bursting from the Allens' house.

Clayton hurried to the spot. A crowd was beginning to gather around the house, but its inmates still slept. Efforts were made to arouse them to a knowledge of their danger, which became every instant more imminent, so rapidly the flames spread and strengthened, and the door was forced open at the same moment that a wild shriek rose from within; but suffocating smoke rolled through the doorway, and flames darted their forked tongues round the staircase, and nobody dared to enter.

Mrs. Allen was speedily seen at a window.

"A ladder!—a ladder!" was loudly called for; but there was none at hand; and while some ran off to the nearest place to get one, the unhappy woman cast herself down upon the gravelled walk to escape the fiery death she dreaded. She was taken up insensible, and carried to the Claytons' cottage, which she had quitted in health and happiness so few hours previously. In another minute Allen, who had gone to arouse his son, came with him to another window. The ladder had arrived, and was quickly planted at it, and he was observed desiring Frank to descend.

"Allen! Allen! save yourself; your wife has escaped!" cried Clayton.

The last words never reached the ear they were addressed to, but were lost in Allen's answering cry of "No, no!—my wife, my wife!" as he disappeared to seek the partner of his many years' wanderings and misfortunes.

"Allen! Allen!" was echoed in twenty voices to call him back. But a crash followed—some part of the flooring had fallen in—and he was never seen again.

Wildly the flames rose and fell, despite the quantities of water from the stream which had been so lavishly cast upon them, flickering, and dancing, and soaring up towards the sky, whose stars were now invisible; and casting a broad, red radiance on the crowd, the wide, smooth meadows, and the waters of the quiet stream. Young Frank Allen sat on the grass, gazing on the fiery mass, which blazed, and hissed, and crackled above the form he had so loved and honored. Just old enough to feel to its full extent the anguish of that moment, without the capability of endurance which added years might have imparted, he watched the remorseless flames with an intensity of grief which forbade all attempts at consolation, and resisted every endeavor to withdraw him from the spot.

The night passed, the fire began to die out, and the rising sun found a heap of smouldering ruins where he had left a happy dwelling; while beneath them lay what had then been a living and breathing form, in full health, and all the strength and energy of manhood's prime. Then Clayton led away the sorrowing boy to his own home, where, for the first time, he learned that his mother, whom he had thought safe and well, was suffering greatly—it soon proved, dying—beneath the same roof; and the dawn of another day found Frank Allen alone—an orphan and destitute, without a relative or a friend from whom he had a right to claim protection or assistance.

But this thought did not at first come to grieve him, for all considerations of self were lost in deep and overwhelming sorrow; and he alone was careless of his future lot, while the whole village was busy talking over it, and wondering what it would be. There had been some doubt, too, about the funeral, when it was known that the Allens left nothing; but Clayton set that at rest at once by charging himself with the expenses; and when that day was over, Frank Allen's fate was the undivided subject of conversation.

Several of the most prosperous inhabitants were talking together on the subject. None of them were rich, but all were capable of spending a good many pounds on anything they chose, without much caring if it were wisely done or not; yet not one, while wondering what should be done with the boy, ever spoke of doing anything for him beyond the merest trifle.

"I wonder what he is fit for," observed one.

"I think his father spoke of sending him to sea," said another.

"And the best thing that could be done with him," added a third; "I dare say we could collect money enough to fit him out; I should not mind a few shillings myself towards it, and I should think the parish might do a little."

"Ah, his father thought of sending him in a very different manner," said the first speaker, pityingly. "But all that's one now, and Frank must be content to get his living as he can."

Philip Clayton stood by in silence. He could not join in those remarks—their tone and manner jarred upon his feelings; and as he walked alone along the streamlet's bank, he thought of Allen's words on the last evening of his life. Truly they seemed soon verified; a few pounds from each of those men, and Frank might be given the power of working his way up in the world.

"But poor Allen was right," sighed Clayton; "the impulses of our maturer years are not to aid the weak and helpless."

It was a long walk which Philip Clayton took that night. When he returned, he found Frank Allen still watching the heap of ruins with which he thought all the happiness of his life had fallen for ever. And even so Clayton mused; his own Harry, yet younger and more helpless, might have mourned over the desolation of his home, and been cast upon the coldness and the charity of strangers. But his mind had been

made up fully during that long and solitary walk, though indeed the purpose had been gathering there stronger and stronger all the while.

Yet he feared to tell his gentle, loving Henrietta, for he knew that though she had tended Mrs. Allen as though she had been a sister, and wept with Frank, and strove to soothe and comfort his grief with all a woman's tenderness and softness, still money was too dear to her to be easily parted with, even for the sake of one whom she pitied and sympathized with so deeply. But Philip was resolved; and though on hearing that he was going to pay fifty pounds as an apprentice-fee for Frank, to secure for him proper instruction in the line for which his father destined him, his wife shed more tears than words of his had ever caused her to shed before, and reproached him bitterly with throwing away the money they had so slowly gathered, he still was firm; for the memory of Allen's words came as a bitter reproach to human nature in which he could not bear to share.

"You ought to think of your children!" said Henrietta, pressing the youngest to her bosom, as if to guard it from some evil which his father's act was drawing down upon it.

"I do think of my children," replied Philip, with much emotion, as he took the other little one in his arms, and glanced out at the field opposite, where Harry was vainly striving to draw Frank from his sorrowful contemplation of the sad, dark spot before them. "I do think of my children; and that, if there were nothing else, would bid me set as I am doing. For I think, Hetty, that one of our beloved ones might have been left desolate as Frank has been. And I think also, Hetty, that we know not how much they may yet be dependent on the kindness and bounty of others. And this thought alone would make me do to Frank as I would should be done unto my own children."

"But this will only make them poorer and more likely to be so dependent," urged Mrs. Clayton, in a tone of feeble remonstrance.

"Oh, Hetty," said her husband, "I wonder that with so much of love there can be such devotion to Mammon in that kind little heart! Do you forget that poverty and riches depend on a mightier will than ours?"

"Then I suppose it must be so," sighed Henrietta. "But it must be a long while yet before we can lay any money out at interest."

Clayton did not answer; but he had learned to know this was indeed a bitter disappointment. However, the letters were written, inquiries were made, and by using every exertion, he got Frank most advantageously placed on board a ship trading to the East.

Five or six months after Clayton received a letter by some encountered vessel, full of the outpourings of a young heart's gratitude; and a year after there came another, but it was the last. In another year Clayton wrote to the owners, when he heard that the ship had been chartered and employed in going from one part of India to another, and had not returned; but no accident to Frank Allen had been reported. So as his own letters to Frank remained unanswered, Clayton supposed that his young charge had grown weary of gratitude.

Yet, though Henrietta sometimes drily intimated that it was an unmerited return for all his kindness, Philip never regretted the part which he had acted, for he wanted not gratitude and thanks, but merely the consciousness of doing right, and the approval of his own heart. This was pleasanter to him than the gratification of her darling wish—the having money out at interest, which had been at last attained—was to his pretty, gentle and amiable, but anxious and calculating wife.

How quickly years glide away, and how soon people are forgotten when they are no longer seen! It took little time for Frank to pass from every one's remembrance but the Claytons'. And then Clayton moved to a distant sea-port town, where a higher salary was given him by another bank, and he and his were soon forgotten.

(To be Continued)

BEAUTY.—Lord Byron observed, justly, that the best part of beauty is that which a picture cannot express. Lord Shaftesbury asserts that all beauty is truth. True features make the beauty of the face, and true proportions the beauty of architecture, as true measure the harmony and music. In poetry which is all fable, truth is still the perfection. Fontenelle thus daintily compliments the sex when he compares women and clocks—the latter serve to point out the hours, the former to make us forget them. There is a magic power in beauty that all confess—a strange witchery that enchants us with a potency as irresistible as that of the magnet. It is to the moral world what gravitation is to the physical. It is easier to write about beauty in women, and its all-pervading influence, than to define what it is. Women are the poetry of the world, in the same sense as the stars are the poetry of heaven. Clear, light-giving, harmonious, they are the terrestrial planets that rule the destinies of mankind.

VIRTUE is not a mushroom that springeth up of itself in one night, when we are asleep or regard it not; but a delicate plant that groweth slowly and tenderly, needing much pains to cultivate it, much care to guard it, much time to mature it. Neither is vice a spirit that will be conjured away with a charm, slain by a single blow, or despatched by one stab. Who, then, will be so foolish as to leave the eradication of vice, and the planting in of virtue into its place, to a few years or weeks? Yet he who procrastinates his repentance and amendment, grossly does so; with his eyes open, he abridges the time allotted for the longest and most important work he has to perform; he willingly avoids the possession of the most durable and satisfying pleasure accessible to human kind—a pure mind, scorning vice in all its forms and loving virtue under all conditions; he is a fool.

SUSPENSE.—I believe that, to the young, suspense is the most intolerable suffering. Active misery always brings with it its own power of endurance. What a common expression it is to hear: "Well, if I had known what I had to go through beforehand I never should have believed it possible that I could have done it." But it is a dreadful thing to be left alone with your imagination—to have to fancy the worst, and yet not know what the worst may be; and this in early youth has a degree of acute anguish that after years cannot know. As we advance in life we find all things here too utterly worthless to grieve over them as we once could grieve; we grow cold and careless; the dust to which we are hastening has entered into our hearts.—Miss Landon.