



The Family Circle.

WHERE IS YOUR BOY TO-NIGHT?

Life is teeming with evil snares.
The gates of sin are wide,
The rosy fingers of pleasure wave,
And beckon the young inside.
Man of the world with open purse,
Seeking your own delight,
Pause ere reason is wholly gone—
Where is your boy to-night?

Sirens are singing on every hand,
Luring the ear of youth,
Gilded falsehood with silver notes
Drowneth the voice of truth.
Dainty ladies in costly robes,
Your parlors gleam with light,
Fate and beauty your senses steep—
Where is your boy to-night?

Tempting whispers of royal spoil
Flatter the youthful soul
Eagerly entering into life,
Restive of all control.
Needs are many, and duties stern
Crowd on the weary sight;
Father, buried in business cares,
Where is your boy to-night?

Pitfalls lurk in the flowery way,
Vice has a golden gate;
Who shall guide the unwearied feet
Into the highway straight?
Patient worker, with willing hand,
Keeping the home hearth bright:
Tired mother, with tender eyes,
Where is your boy to-night?

Turn his feet from the evil paths
Ere they have entered in;
Keep him unspotted while yet he may;
Earth is so stained with sin;
Ere he has learned to follow wrong,
Teach him to love the right;
Watch ere watching is wholly vain—
Where is your boy to-night?

—Selected

THE CHILDREN'S HOME

BY HOWE BENNING.

If it had not been for a feather you might never have heard of Beulah Sharpe in your lives.

It was just dusk, and two girls were going home from their work in the mill.

"I tell you ten dollars a week isn't bad, now is it?" the oldest, a coarse-looking girl was saying.

"I never made that in a week before," replied her companion. "I hardly know how to spend it."

"Pooh, you goose, I never have any trouble. I'm bound there shan't be a girl in Lincoln, not even Judge Perry's granddaughter, shall have nicer things than I do. Say, I paid eighty dollars for that new black silk of mine."

"Why, Joanna Baker!"

"True as preachin'. I'm going to have as fine things and good times as anybody you believe. Do you pay anything for board?"

"No, father said when I left school if I'd earn my clothes I might have my board, but I was eighteen last week, and I expect he'll think I might help some."

"You look after the children, that's enough, tell him. See here; I want you to see this."

They had come out on the principal street of their busy little town now, and were in front of the largest milliner shop. Here, in the one square window, every conceivable tint that could be worn from the seven prismatic colors, hung in the brilliant light in forms of feather, flower, or ribbon, and in the centre and brightest of all was a long blue plume with silvery floating tips, a lovely miracle of French art, not nature.

"Isn't that a beauty, Beulah Sharpe? And it's just what you want to go with your navy-blue suit. You'll make a sensation for once in your life. I'm going to order a black one. It's only ten dollars."

"Only ten dollars!" echoed Beulah.

"No, and it looks good for twenty. Go in and see."

But Beulah hung back. "I'll think of it."

"Pshaw! it'll be gone; get while you can is my motto."

"I never had anything half so lovely," hesitating.

"Don't stand at that window getting tempted to foolishness, Beulah Sharpe, but come home with me," said a strong, clear voice behind them. "It's a saving the pence that piles up the pounds in the pocket."

"Why didn't you speak to Joanna too, Betsy?" asked Beulah as they walked on.

"There's no use seekin' to draw water from an empty well," was the reply; "but you've sense when you bring it to the fore, and ye mind well where it it said in Holy Writ, 'He that gathereth in summer is a wise son,' and the other is a fool, mind ye that, Beulah Sharpe."

"Well, good night," said the girl, running up the stairs to her own home. "Hasi't father come yet, Agnes?" she asked of a slender-looking girl of fourteen.

"No, I wish he would, the potatoes are half spoiled now," was the fretful reply.

It was a very plain but not cheerless picture that little second-story home, with its clean floor, its few pictures on the white-washed walls, and its petunia in full bloom in the window-seat. The bright fire was very welcome after the evening chill, and the song of the tea-kettle and the aroma of baked potatoes very suggestive after a tin-pail dinner. On the old-fashioned settee a young girl of seven or eight was cutting paper-dolls and stroking the cat. Beyond the stove two doors opened into small bedrooms.

"Agnes is tired and cross to-night," came presently from the young miss on the lounge.

"I guess you'd be if you'd done what I have to-day," spoke the sister quickly. "The washing was dreadful, I never stopped a minute till just now. Everybody does get their clothes so dirty."

Beulah looked at her young sister with a pang of self-reproach. At her age she was in school full of plans of being a teacher, or a great scholar, or even a writer. One never knows what girls may turn out, least of all themselves. Then, two years later, came her mother's long sickness, and Beulah fired by a new ambition went into the factory to earn money. Then the mother died, and now for more than a year the home as we see it to-night with the girl housekeeper. It was hard. And just then Mr. Sharpe and Davy, a year older than Agnes, came in, and the family were at home.

"Your hand trembles, father," Beulah said, as he took his second cup of tea from her.

"Yes, I'm growing old," said the father patiently.

"Father ought not to work so evenings, it's enough for him to drive nails and plane all day," said Davy.

"I wish you wouldn't, father," said Beulah.

Mr. Sharpe did not reply to that, but after a moment asked, "Did the coal come, Agnes?"

"Yes, sir; the man put it in the shed."

"Did he ask for the money?"

"Yes, sir; I told him what you said."

There was a little sigh as Mr. Sharpe set back his cup.

"The rent man's been here, too," volunteered Ida.

"You gave him that money, Agnes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nine dollars a month seems a good deal to pay for three upstairs rooms," remarked Davy.

"Get me the Bible, Ida," said her father, as they pushed back from table, "I am late to-night."

For this plain, quiet carpenter never forgot his Lord, in whose footsteps he humbly walked. The reading for that evening concluded with the words, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." And as he finished Mr. Sharpe said, "There's a comfort there for us. I used to hope more than anything to get a home for myself and children, but if I never do, and it's not likely I will now, we are as well off as the Saviour on earth, and that's enough for me." Then followed the simple prayer, and Mr. Sharpe, taking his hat, went off to "extra hours." Agnes and Ida washed the dishes and went to bed. Beulah sat down by the lamp to mend a rent Ida had got in playing tag that day. Davy was already

there busy with slate and pencil, for he studied every evening.

"Did you notice what father said after reading to-night?" she asked at last.

"Yes," answered Davy, "poor father."

"Why?" said Beulah quickly.

"I'm afraid he's working too hard. See how thin and stooping he's grown. I tell you times are hard on a man this year. Wages low and money close."

"Davy, I earned ten dollars last week."

"Whew!" whistled the boy. "I wish I could. I'd stop his work evenings. I don't believe he'll live a year at this rate."

"You don't mean that, Davy?"

"I just do; see how he coughs nights."

"How much does he earn by extra hours?"

"About two dollars a week."

"I'll pay him that if he'll give it up."

"Good for you, he must."

Again silence on Beulah's part, slate and pencil on the boy's. Suddenly a start.

"How much did they say that coal bill was?"

"Nine dollars."

"Here's the money, run and pay it, will you?"

"That I will," and boy and bill were off together, the former back in a few minutes with a receipt.

"Good for sore eyes," he said, spreading it on the table.

"I'll keep it for father's then," said his sister.

Again silence as before, and again Beulah:

"Davy, do you suppose father feels so disappointed that he has not made that home he wanted?"

"Of course, terrible. Father means a thing, you know, when he says it."

A longer silence this time.

"Davy, we'll get the home for him."

The boy dropped his pencil. "How?"

"I don't know, we'll do it. No more gewgaws for me. My father's of more count than feathers. We'll do it, see if we don't."

"Hurrah for you?" shouted the boy under his breath, "but three dollars a week isn't very steep, and a fellow's clothes do wear out so, and I eat an awful sight."

"Never mind," said Beulah. "eat away, it'll come."

And that was the foundation of the new home. Every house has to have a foundation lower than the stone and mason-work. Sometimes it is a full pocket; here it was good will and love for the father, and best of all, I think, the prayer for help that went up from the side of Beulah's bed and that told in simple faith just what was wanted.

Joanna was highly offended to find that the coveted plume might hang in the window for all Beulah's purse, and her temper was not helped a few days later by seeing it on the dainty head of Judge Terry's daughter, and by Betsy's remark that it looked rather better coming out of those gates than a factory alley.

Another Monday Beulah and her ten dollars brought changes to the little home. Mr. Sharpe took his two dollars and a week-old paper and sat down with a very happy face for the evening. A stout Biddy had helped in the wash for three shillings. And then Beulah took an old stocking and tied up seven dollars in it, and Davy his quarter, and Agnes, who had been let into the wonderful secret, her five cents earned by some coarse trimming and the whole hid away for a nest-egg.

But it was wonderful what an interest in real estate began to be felt by these perspective holders. Davy was a grocer's boy, and in his frequent journeys about town became inspector in general of every square rod in the village limits, and as Beulah was out at four o'clock on Saturdays she almost always had to take a walk to inspect some place where he had found the welcome placard "For Sale." Sometimes the two girls got into an empty house and examined every closet and speculated on possibilities with the zest of regular house-hunters.

And regularly every month a snug addition was written down in their savings-bank book, for the stocking soon ceased to serve in that capacity. And at last the year came around, and in high glee they counted up two hundred and fifty-odd dollars, as their result. Of course if they could have put in as much every week as that first week it would have been more, but Beulah found as Davy that even the plainest clothes would wear out, and then that coal-bill experiment

proved too pleasant not to be repeated sometimes.

"But I'm promoted now a dollar a week," said Davy, "so you may expect great things of me."

"But you're that much longer," said Agnes looking him over with a critical eye.

"And so you are afraid it will take it all to fill me up, are you?" asked her brother good-naturedly, and the conference broke up in a laugh.

"Seems to me you have lots of intimacies now-a-days," was injured Ida's remark.

Of Joanna, Beulah didn't see much now.

"She's getting too shabby for me," the former was heard to remark. "I want my friends up to times."

Another winter of work and saving, but when the birds began to set up their establishments in the spring-time, and the house-cleaning fever took possession of the matrons, these planners of ours began to bestir themselves in earnest.

"I do hope we shall have a down-stairs to our new house," pouted Agnes one morning from a journey to empty a pail.

"And a bay-window," dreamed Beulah out loud.

"What?" said the practical sister.

"Oh, I was only looking ahead," answered the other laughing. "But after all a window isn't as large as a house, and if we can get one why not the other? Anyway it looks well in my picture."

"Don't you think we had better buy land and let father build?" asked Davy.

"No, there must be a roof of some kind, and then he can fix all he likes, but he must have one moment in his life of whole enjoyment."

"Even if he has to tear down his roof the next," said Davy laughing. "What business talents you women possess," but after all he felt just the same.

And every day the prayer from Beulah's bedside grew more earnest and fuller of faith. And with the last of summer came another good answer. Their mother's father, who lived in a distant state, had died in the spring, and now there came to Davy, who was his namesake, a check for one hundred and fifty dollars, the result of a small investment made at his birth.

"What will you do with it, Davy?" asked his father.

"Leave it in the savings-bank until I can use it," answered the boy, with a smile for his sisters.

The first week of fall brought, as usual, a vacation in the mill for repairs.

"Now we must look," said Beulah.

"I believe I have found it, girls," said Davy dropping in, "the old Kent house is to be had for seven hundred and fifty dollars."

Beulah sank into a chair as if struck. Everybody in L— knew the old story and-a-half brown house standing just at the edge of the village, on a sunny slope whose grass bore the earliest tint of green in the spring, and played in the flickering leaf-shadows of summer, and caught the last smile of autumnal warmth, where a venerable spinster had lived and died alone. Now the heir was a wealthy man many miles away, and the tiny house under its two sheltering elms had only a market value for him. He wanted to dispose of it, and as Davy's employer was also a justice, it had been left in his hands, and before sunset the next day the bargain was made, seven hundred paid in cash, the rest by note, and the deed made out in Mr. Sharpe's name, and all this time not a whisper reached the ears of the new owner.

"How shall we surprise him!" asked Agnes.

To their joy they found that the next week he would be out in the country at work on a schoolhouse, and they laid their plans accordingly.

Tuesday morning he was off, promising to return on Thursday eve, and fifteen minutes later the three girls were on their way with pail and cloth and broom to the new home.

Oh, how delightful it looked in that fair September morning, with its sheltering elms locking their branches over the low roof—its broad, white door-stone in front, its tiny garden at the back, and at the sides six or eight apple-trees bending under their weight of luscious fruit, old-fashioned pound-sweets and seek-no-farther, and the like.

"I can't believe it," said Beulah, fitting the key.

"It's just like a fairy story," said Ida,