

The Family Circle.

THE LETTER SHE DID NOT WRITE.

It was never set down in black and white.
The loving letter she did not write;
She thought it out as she baked the bread,
As she mended the stockings and made the bed;
She wove its beautiful sentences through
The morning's work that was hers to do;
But it never was written with ink and pen,
For the boys came home from school, and then
She hadn't a chance in black and white
To scribble the letter she did not write.

It never was dropped in the corner box
Which the faithful postman's key unlocks;
It never was even begun you see.
Though it throbbled with a true heart's constancy;
The far-away mother, the friend beloved,
The kinsman dear, whom it must have moved,
Were touching her hand with tender clasp,
Were holding her heart in insistent grasp,
But it never was sent on its blessed flight,
The dream of the letter she did not write.

She gave up trying the thing at last,
When the busy day was almost past,
Filled with the measure from sun to sun
Of the woman's work which is never done;
The duties sacred which yet seem slight,
The little wrongs which must be set right.
She had found her paper and taken her seat,
When the baby wakened, "Hush, my sweet!"
And Freddy brought her a puzzling sum,
And Teddy deafened her with his drum;
No wonder it faded quite out of sight
The dear home letter she meant to write.

But yet, ah yet! were the waves of air
Not stirred by her tender, wordless prayer?
And did not her loving heart, full fain,
Send out its cry to her own and pain
Of longing bring in a subtle way
A pleasure deep in the waning day,
When somehow she felt that an answer bright
Had come to the letter she did not write?

—Margaret E. Sanister in *Christian Intelligencer*.

DOROTHY'S MISSION.

"I have chosen my mission, mamma," said Dorothy, coming into her mother's room early one bright, beautiful morning, the pleasant home like room where Mrs. Lawrence had spent many weary days of painful invalidism, and where she now lay on a soft couch drawn up near the south window, so that the rays of the sun could fall across her pale face and slender hands.

"Have you, dear?" she asked, a smile preceding the usual morning kiss upon the rosy lips pressed to her white ones.

"Yes," replied Dorothy, excitedly, "you see one topic in young people's meeting lately was missions, and ever since I have been trying to decide what I would choose, where I could do the most good, you know."

"Yes," said her mother with an encouraging pat on the plump hand on the pillow near by.

"Well, mamma," continued her daughter, flushing slightly underneath the gaze of her mother's quiet, sympathetic eyes, "you know how sort of wild and reckless some of the boys and girls are in our school? Well, I have decided to talk to them about the way they are acting, and then I intend spending all the spare time I have from my music and studios visiting the sick." The last fell from her lips with a complacency that brought an amused smile to Mrs. Lawrence's lips, but she replied, quite soberly:—

"You have chosen a very wide field, my daughter, and one in which you will need great wisdom to guide you. Let me give you a text to carry with you, dear. 'So ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' And now my girl must hasten away to school, else she will be late," and pressing a long kiss on Dorothy's fair forehead, as a blessing, Mrs. Lawrence watched her start away with a bright smile, which quickly gave place to a sigh as the door closed behind the pretty face and graceful form of the daughter

whose presence made both music and sunshine in her lonely room.

The days passed by, and Dorothy, absorbed in her new mission, found hardly a moment to give to the patient, suffering mother, longing so anxiously for her loving companionship.

Dorothy met with great success as a "missionary." A general favourite with her mates, they listened to her words of reproof or advice, and promised to mend their ways, and some even joined the Young People's Society through her influence. Many homes wherein sickness and sorrow dwelt were brightened by her presence. Altogether Dorothy's mission prospered, and she was beginning to feel quite like a little saint set apart from her less fortunate co-workers in the society when her zeal received a blow that was almost overwhelming.

It was in this wise. Coming home from meeting one evening she happened—yet, who can say it was a mere happening—to walk behind two of the older girls, who were deep in conversation and did not observe her. She did not mean to listen to what they were saying; the words fell on her ears uninvited, and in the crisp night air struck with a force that was almost startling. For both these older girls were young women whose good opinion Dorothy valued highly.

"Mabel," said one, "isn't it perfectly heartless and undaughterly the way Dorothy Lawrence neglects her poor sick mother?"

The little listener in the rear gasped, as she waited breathlessly for the reply to the—to her—terrible question.

"Yes, it is," replied Blanche emphatically. "I am so disappointed in Dorothy! I thought her Christianity was more real and unselfish and not to be seen of men. Some day when she loses her sainted, suffering mother, she will realize the awful mistake she is making now. Poor child! Her cross will be more than she can bear! Still, I cannot see how she can be so blind. No one in all the world needs her as her mother does, and I cannot understand why she does not give her love and attention to her instead of scattering it broadcast among the many who do not need her."

"You see it just as I do, Blanche," replied Mabel. "I even heard our pastor speak of it to mamma lately. I wish he would talk to Dorothy. I would myself, if I dared, but she is getting so puffed up in her 'mission work,' as she calls her gadding about, that I fear she'd not take any advice from me."

"Well, dear," said Blanche, softly, "we can pray for her, poor child, that her eyes may be opened, and surely the Lord will hear us."

"Oh, God!" sobbed the little figure stealing along in the shadow behind them. "My eyes are opened at last. I pray Thee to help me that they may never be closed again to what is my real mission work. How could I forget my poor, dear, suffering mother! And she so patient and unselfish that she would never say a word either!"

The two older girls passed swiftly on toward their homes, never dreaming of the seed their words had sown in the aching, tender little heart coming on alone in the darkness. But oh, what a joyful time to Dorothy and her mother! Always together, nothing or no one allowed to take from the one to whom belonged her loving devotion, the happy, willing little daughter who at last, and thank God, not too late, had found her real mission.

"IAN MACLAREN."

In view of the visit to be made to Toronto at an early date by Rev. John Watson, D.D. (Ian Maclaren), the following sketch of him by W. Robertson Nicoll, which appeared first in the *Bookman*, will be read with interest.—[Ed.]

Rev. John Watson, "Ian Maclaren," author of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," "The Days of Auld Land Syne," etc., is a pure Scot, although he was born in Manningtree, Essex, where his father, who was engaged in the excise, and reached a very high position in that service, was stationed at the time. Very shortly after his birth the family removed to London, of which Ian Maclaren has a distinct recollection. The formative years of his childhood were spent, however, first at Perth and then at Stirling. He was an only child, and his father and mother were both remarkable personalities—the father strongly religious, profoundly interested in religion, and a devoted elder of the Free Church of Scotland. Ian Maclaren's mother, to whose memory his last book is dedicated, was in some respects different from her husband. She was Highland, and understood Gaelic, though she could not speak it. It was, she used to say, the best language for love and for anger. Though also firm in her religious convictions, she was not like her husband, an Evangelical, but leaned rather to the highest type of Moderatism, as it is called in Scotland. The name in England would perhaps be Broad Church.

Young Watson was accustomed for many years to spend the summers with his uncles, who were farmers in a large way, first about Blairgowrie, then about Meigle. They belonged to the Established Church in Scotland, so that his sympathies were well divided between the great Presbyterian Churches of that country. In due time he went to Edinburgh University, and although diligent and studious, was not specially impressed by any of the professors, with the single exception of Dr. Masson, who has just retired from the chair of English Literature. He liked classics, and was attracted by Sellar, the professor of Latin. In philosophical studies he was also interested, and was secretary, and afterwards president of the Philosophical Society connected with the University. When he had completed his studies, he decided to be a minister of the Free Church. This was the strong wish of his father, and he was willing, although he never felt the call to the ministry as some say they have felt it whose usefulness has certainly not been greater than his. He passed through the curriculum of the New College, Edinburgh.

He served as assistant for a short time to Dr. J. H. Wilson, of the Barclay Church in Edinburgh, and then became minister of the Free Church in Logiealmond, in Perthshire, now so well known as Drumtochty. There his uncle had been minister before the Disruption of 1843. The congregation was very small, but the work was pleasant, and the young minister made a close study of his people. It is noteworthy that while at Logiealmond he had literary plans very much in the line of those which were carried out twenty years later. He had, in fact, conceived a book which would have been very much on the lines of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," but self-distrust prevented him from going on. Doubtless neither he nor the world has suffered from this delay. A brilliant popular preacher, he naturally

soon received invitations to leave his quiet parish, and he ultimately accepted one from St. Matthew's in Glasgow, to be colleague to Dr. Samuel Miller. But Mr. Watson found his true sphere when, three years later, he became minister of a new Presbyterian church built in Sefton Park, Liverpool. The building was a very handsome one, and the neighborhood was gradually rising. The young minister was now able to draw round him people of his own type, and he thinks he began to find himself shortly after he settled in Liverpool. Now the fine church is constantly crowded by one of the largest and most influential congregations in Liverpool, and there cannot be much hesitation in saying that among English preachers of the younger generation Mr. Watson holds a foremost, if not the first place. Although he writes his sermons, he does not read them, and he is a speaker of extraordinary force and clearness. Touches of pathos are not infrequent in his sermons, but, as a rule, he avoids humor. He has a strong sense of reverence, and the service in Sefton Park Church, which has been carefully arranged by himself, satisfies every requirement alike of culture and devotion.

Mr. Watson went on happily and busily in this service for seventeen years, making for himself a great reputation in Liverpool, where he was, and is, perhaps, the most influential minister, but not much known outside, save in Presbyterian circles. It is two years since, on the suggestion of a friend, he commenced writing the sketches which have given him a world-wide fame. His devotion, however, is still given to the pulpit, and his literary work he looks upon as quite secondary.

The following sketch is taken from the *Belfast Witness*, on the occasion of a lecture which Dr. Watson delivered there, on "Certain Traits in Scottish Character," under the auspices of the Central Presbyterian Association:

"The lecturer, who, on rising, was received with round after round of applause, said he would begin by reminding the audience that while national character must always be a most interesting study, certain circumstances favored at the present time that particular study. They were living throughout the whole Empire in a state of national renaissance, and the wave of nationalism that had passed over Ireland and over Wales had also touched the Scottish shore, and the Scottish people within recent years had been realizing themselves much more clearly and much more proudly than in a long period preceding. Scottish architecture had begun to revive, and soon there would not be a district of Scotland without some church or without some castle or, it might be, without some street in a provincial town that would exhibit in stone and lime the ideas of the national mind and the trend of national history. Thus the Scottish Church, which had always been the mother of the nation, an austere but faithful mother, had been returning to the first love of the days after the Reformation and before the Puritan influence—the days in which it was considered that the Scottish Church was most nearly representative of the Scottish mind both in her doctrine and in her worship. Step by step the worship of the Scottish Church was being restored to that state of primitive purity, and although he was not there directly or indirectly, to belittle the great Puritan movement of England, which did so much