



The Family Circle.

WATCH!

BY ANNA SHIPTON.

"Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith."
—1 Pet. v. 8.

Keep thy watch, it is daybreak,
Though all seems misty now;
Watch, for a star will guide thee
Afar o'er the mountain brow.
Mean unto men the treasures
Thy labor of love will bring;
But better than gold and jewels
To the heart of thy heavenly King.

Keep thy watch in the morning,
Though the sky seems bright and clear;
A cloud in the west is rising,
A tempest is hovering near,
Thou say'st it is nought, but watch it,
Thou knowest not what it may be;
If thine ears are open to hear it,
It bringeth a message to thee.

Keep thy watch at the noontide,
In the warmth of its fervid glow;
Thou art lost in thy vineyard labor,
But a serpent may hide below.
A lion lurks in the thicket,
Thou say'st he is sleeping or dead—
But he waiteth for careless footsteps,
And marketh the path that they tread.

Keep thy watch in the evening,
When the labor of day is done,
For many a poisonous vapor
Will rise with the setting sun.
But watch, for thy Lord is near thee,
As when in the fruitful field,
And lean on the love that leads thee:
He is thy Sun and thy Shield.

Keep thy watch at the midnight,
Mark the stars as they rise;
Listen, and they will tell thee
How safe are His promises.
True was His care in the morning,
Safe is the truth of His Word:
Thy Sun and thy Shield in the daytime,
Is at even thy great Reward.
—The Christian.

WEDDING PRESENTS.

BY MARY C. BARTLETT.

"Mother! mother!" cried Carrie Sefton, bursting in hastily from school, one day. "Miss Carleton is going to be married to Mr. Horace Bent. Won't you give me some money to help buy her wedding-veil?"

"Help buy her wedding-veil!" repeated her sister Annie, scornfully. "What a ridiculous girl you are, Carrie!"

"Sue Graves told me so, any way."

"Sue Graves doesn't know anything about it. We couldn't raise enough money in the whole school."

"I don't believe 'twould cost so very much," persisted Carrie. "Just a little piece of lace, so."

"It's a large piece of lace, and there are different kinds of lace," explained Annie, patronizingly. "Some are cheap and some are dear. Of course, Miss Carleton would want a nice one. But we're not going to buy a veil at all."

"I should think your taste might be a little doubtful in such a matter," said Mamma, with a smile.

"But we're going to give her something," continued Annie. "We can't decide until we see how much money we get. You will give us some, won't you, mother?"

"We'll see about it."

"Mr. Bent is immensely rich," said Annie, with an important air. Grace Markham says he owns a magnificent house in Chicago, where they are going to live; and Miss Carleton will have everything she wants, always."

"I should think it was hardly necessary to buy a present for a person who is sure of always having everything she wants," laughed Mamma.

"Oh! well, you know people always like to receive presents: and we might give her something that she would never think of herself."

"I think that is quite likely to be the case if you select it yourselves," said Mamma, with another laugh. But she promised the money, and the anxious children were satisfied.

Many were the whispered consultations held by Miss Carleton's scholars about that all-absorbing topic, the present. The girls clustered together in little groups at recess, and sometimes, alas! could not resist the temptation of saying just a word about it during school-hours. The teacher could not fail to

perceive that the desire for knowledge was not the all-absorbing passion among her youthful charges, and wondered at first at the almost unanimous desertion of the playground; but, being a quick-witted woman, her keen eyes penetrated the mystery ere the great project was fairly under way.

"I hope it won't be a photograph album or a spoonholder," she said, smilingly, to herself, thinking of the duplicates of each which reposed upon the shelf of her closet at home. "Otherwise, I am resigned."

But there were some children in the school who contributed nothing toward the present. They had all been asked, "just out of politeness," as Grace Markham said; for no money could reasonably be expected from children whose clothes were worn and faded, and who sometimes even had to stay at home from school because "their shoes were out." These children kept aloof from the others, affecting indifference to a project in which they felt that they could have no part. To them it was only another tantalizing evidence of the power of riches; an evidence which was little needed, as alas! most of them were fully convinced of it before.

"I wouldn't give 'em a cent, if I had fifty," said Kate O'Leary, a large girl, with bold, black eyes. "Such a time just because she's going to get married! Such an awful rich man, too! You'd think he owned the whole school-house."

"There's Hannah O'Brien, givin' in her money as big as the rest of 'em," said another girl who was standing near.

"Why shouldn't she? Dennis O'Brien's made a pile of money out of that whiskey-shop of his. I'll tell her so, too, if she comes a-near me."

"I don't care how much they get," said Biddy Carey, with a good-natured smile. "I'd give if I could; but when I can't I don't cry. Miss Carleton has been a good teacher to me; but she wouldn't find as many coppers as would buy her a dishcloth in all our part."

"Our part" referred to the three rooms which Biddy's father hired of Dennis O'Brien, the liquor-dealer, to pay the rent of which the whole family were obliged to pinch and scrimp in every possible way.

But there was one scholar who watched the proceedings of the contributors with silent interest. She could not add the smallest sum to their amount; but she felt neither indifferent, laughing like Biddy, nor bitter, like scowling Kate. Her inability to give was to her simply a great trial, which she bore courageously, as she had borne many trials before, never dreaming what a heroine she was. When the baby "took sick" with the measles, she had left school and nursed him faithfully. Hardly had she regained her footing in the class when her father "came down with a sickness"; and again her small services were in requisition. Perceiving the handiness and quickness of his little daughter, Mr. Patrick Mackay had conceived the brilliant idea of sending her to live out with Mrs. Sweeney, an acquaintance of his, who wanted a young lass to wait upon the boarders. Here she had lived until discharged, on account of her size, (or, rather, want of size), which, as it was no fault of hers, her father was kind enough to forgive, and had graciously allowed her to go back to school again, to her great delight. But oh, dear! how much the girls had learned while she was away.

"I'm afraid you don't try, Maggie," said Miss Carleton, when she had explained the troublesome process of multiplication for the fifth time.

It was the morning after her return. The other girls had gone. Poor Maggie was "kept in."

"I tried to try," she replied, sadly; "but it gets all mixed up with me. I'm more used to the dishes now. Baby was cross last night an' I sat up late mindin' him, while mother sewed my clothes, to come to-day."

Miss Carleton looked at the patient little face. Then she stooped and kissed the white forehead just above the tired eyes, and bade Maggie go home, and go to bed, the latter part of which injunction being such an unheard-of proposition that it made the child smile pitifully to herself as she left the room.

But Maggie had never forgotten that kiss. When the question of the present was agitated she wished—oh, how much!—that she could add her mite with the rest. Her face was very sober as she told her mother of Miss Carleton's intended departure. "She's to marry a man with no end of money. She'll get everything she wants," said she in conclusion; for the rumors of the almost fabulous wealth of Mr. Bent, at which no one would have been more astonished than that gentleman himself, had reached her ears.

"She'll be gettin' some things she don't want, if she lives long in the world," was the mother's somewhat ungracious rejoinder.

Maggie didn't answer. She took her little kitten in her arms, and a few salt drops fell upon his smooth black fur.

The kitten was a real comfort to Maggie Mackay. She had a way of whispering her troubles into his ear, and since the few squally

days succeeding his introduction into the family, she had never found him wanting in sympathy. At first he had been a shy little creature, resisting ungratefully all her efforts to caress him. So very wild was he, in fact, that in a fit of momentary indignation she had christened him "Spitty Crock." The first name for his disposition, the second for his color. As Spitty became accustomed to his new quarters there was a wonderful improvement in his manners; but his name remained unchanged. He was still "Spitty Crock."

As Maggie sat stroking her little favorite, the door opened and Biddy Carey entered.

"They're to give her a picture," said she eagerly. "Grace Markham's mother chose it. There's a frame on it, an' trees an' water. I seen it."

Maggie was silent.

"When our ships comes in we'll give her somethin' better nor a picture," laughed Biddy. "I haven't a cent's worth now, nor you neither. Yes, you have, too. You have old Spitty Crock here. He's better nor a hundred pictures." And she pulled his ears and stroked his fur the wrong way, until he put up his back and growled with true feline indignation.

Maggie said not a word. She had caught, half unwillingly, at Biddy's laughing suggestion. Why should not Spitty Crock be an acceptable present to a young housekeeper elect? He was good and playful, and would no doubt be able by and by to do his part in the way of rat and mouse killing, in which his mother was such an adept. He loved everybody—when they didn't tease him. In short, he was just the dearest little kitten in the world. Mrs. Sweeney kept a cat. So did Mrs. Baxter, at the great house where her mother washed. She was almost sure that Miss Carleton would like him; but oh! how could she give up darling little Spitty Crock?

Maggie fought a battle with herself that afternoon, and came off more than conqueror.

When the presentation day arrived great was the commotion among Miss Carleton's pupils. The lady made every effort to preserve an expression of discreet unconsciousness; but found it almost beyond her power. When, however, just before the close of the session, Annie Sefton walked up to the desk with the picture in her hand, and made a neat little speech, which she had carefully learned for the occasion, the teacher's behavior was all that her "loving scholars" could desire.

Nobody missed Maggie Mackay from the group of eager children who crowded round the teacher after school. Nobody saw a little figure enter the building, nearly an hour later, bringing a covered basket in one small, trembling hand. She had waited until she thought the scholars were gone. When she reached the school-room she found Miss Carleton, with bonnet and shawl on, ready for departure. Two great tears were rolling slowly down her cheeks.

"If any one had told me that I should ever cry at the thought of leaving this old room," said she, impatiently, to herself, as she wiped her eyes, "I should never have believed it, never!" Then she turned, and saw Maggie standing with the basket in her hand.

"What is this?" she asked, surprised.

"It's a Spitty Crock," replied Maggie, lifting the cover a very little, and disclosing a small black head and a pair of frightened green eyes. "I can't let you see him good. He might run away. He's for you, ma'am."

"For me!" said the astonished teacher.

"Yes'm. I hadn't no money to bring for the picture, an' I thought—people keeps cats—an' Spitty's a good cat. He'll catch the rats when he's bigger—an'—he plays beautiful."

Poor little Maggie. Never had she loved Spitty Crock so dearly as at this moment.

"But will you not miss him very much?"

asked Miss Carleton.

"There's one in Miss Connell's part," replied Maggie, trying hard to keep back the tears.

"She hath cast in more than they all," repeated the teacher to herself, involuntarily thinking of the widow's mite. She shut the school-room door carefully, and, taking the basket in her hand, began to untie the string that held the cover.

"I must look at my present," said she. "You must introduce us to each other, Maggie."

"Oh! please don't," begged poor Maggie. "He'll know me again, an'—," she stopped suddenly.

"My dear little Maggie," said Miss Carleton, gently, "why do you give your kitten to me, when you love him so?"

"I wanted to," replied Maggie simply. "He'll not plague you much. He likes them that's good to him."

"I shall love him dearly for your sake." The child looked up gratefully, smiling through her tears.

"But why did you give him such a queer name, Maggie?"

"'Twas because he's so black, an' he used to be cross."

"I shall call him 'Mac,' for you. But if I have the cat, I must have the basket, too." This was the device of a kindly heart for the delicate bestowal of a sum of money, which she put into the child's little red hand.

"Now," she continued, "it is getting late. The best of friends must part, and we must go." She took the small, tear-stained face between her two hands, looking at it for a moment earnestly, with moistening eyes.

"I shall never forget you, my good, good little Maggie."

She kissed the trembling lips once, twice, thrice. Then the child turned and left the room, without another word.

When Mr. and Mrs. Horace Bent took their departure for their Western home much curiosity was expressed among their many friends as to the contents of a certain small basket which the lady held carefully in her lap, and which she laughingly insisted that no hand but her own should touch. Their curiosity was not satisfied; but you and I, dear reader, can easily guess the secret. It was the little black kitten Mac, no longer Spitty Crock.

A STRUGGLE FOR APPEARANCES.

"I have tickets for the concert to-night, Annie," said James Henley, coming into the sitting-room, where his wife was working the sewing-machine with a busy whirr.

"Oh, James, how I wish I could go!" The light died away from the husband's face in a second.

"Wish you could go, Annie! Why, of course you can go."

"I can't, James. I must finish these three dresses before Sunday, and it will take every minute."

"Three dresses?"

"For Jennie, Susan, and Lottie. All the spring things are ready but these dresses."

"But this is only Wednesday."

"I know, James; but look at the work. There are overskirts to each, and ruffles on all the waists. Jennie's has three flounces. All the children in the congregation are well-dressed, James. You cannot afford to put the sewing out, so I must do it."

"Let the children dress more simply, then. Come, Annie, stop that buzz for once, and come to this concert."

"Can't you go?"

"And leave you? I should not enjoy it if I knew you were stitching here. Come."

With a heavy sigh, as if James were exacting a sacrifice instead of giving her a pleasure, Annie left the room, and went to her own apartment to dress for the concert.

All through the evening, while her husband drank in the sweet sounds in which he delighted, Annie, with her face all polite interest, was thinking of the unfinished work.

"Was it not delightful?" James said, as they walked home in the soft spring moonlight.

"Delightful! I am glad I went, James; Mrs. Gordon had on her new spring dress, and her dresses all come from London. The trimming on her basque is quite a new style, and I am sure I can put Jennie's on in the same way."

Sunday morning shone clear and cloudless. Mrs. Henley had put the last stitch into Lottie's dress as the clock struck twelve, and she wakened with a pain in her chest and headache, but a feeling of triumph. Her children would wear their new things, that had cost nothing but the material. Nothing! Mrs. Henley did not estimate the hours spent over the machine, the weariness, the neglect of many little duties. There had been no actual money laid out in dressmaking, so it was clear gain on the material.

Very pretty the children looked when they were ready for church. Jenny and Susan, twins of ten years old, were dressed alike, in delicate pearl color, trimmed with blue, and hats of the newest shape and blue ribbons. Lottie wore cerise color, with cerise trimming, for Lottie was a brunette of seven.

The charges at starting for Sunday-school were—

"Be sure you lift your overskirts when you sit down; don't lean back upon the streamers of your hats, and walk where you will not spoil your light boots. Don't strain your gloves."

"Overdressed, Annie!" remarked Mr. Henley. "Your own dresses are not more elaborate."

"It is the fashion now to cut children's dresses like ladies'. But you ought to be proud of your children, James. Everybody compliments me upon the taste with which I dress them."

"Annie!" Mr. Henley said, suddenly, leading his wife to a mirror, "look at your own face."

"Well," she said, wondering what he could mean.

"Your cheeks are as white as chalk; there is a heavy line under your eyes, and your