

## The Family Circle.

## "Curfew Must not Ring To-Night."

England's sun was setting o'er the hills so far away,  
Filling the land with misty beauty, at the close of  
one sad day;  
And the last rays kissed the forehead of a man and  
maiden fair—  
He with step so slow and weary; she with sunny,  
floating hair;  
He with bowed head, sad and thoughtful; she with  
lips so cold and white,  
Struggled to keep back the murmur, "Curfew must  
not ring to-night."

"Sexton," Bessie's white lips faltered, pointing to  
the prison old,  
With its walls so tall and gloomy, walls so dark  
and damp and cold—  
"I've a lover in that prison, doomed this very night  
to die  
At the ringing of the curfew; and no earthly help  
is nigh.

Cromwell will not come till sunset," and her face  
grew strangely white,  
As she spoke in husky whispers: "Curfew must  
not ring to-night."

"Bessie," calmly spoke the sexton (every word  
pierced her young heart  
Like a thousand gleaming arrows—like a deadly  
poisoned dart),  
"Long, long years I've rung the curfew from that  
gloomy shadowed tower;  
Every evening, just at sunset, it has told the twi-  
light hour;  
I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and  
right;  
Now I'm old, I will not miss it. Girl, the curfew  
rings to-night,"

Wild her eyes, and pale her features, stern and  
white her thoughtful brow;  
And, within her heart's deep centre, Bessie made a  
solemn vow.  
She had listened, while the judges read, without a  
tear or sigh—  
"At the ringing of the curfew, Basil Underwood  
must die."

And her breath came fast and faster; and her eyes  
grew large and bright;  
One low murmur, scarcely spoken, "Curfew must  
not ring to-night."

She with light step bounded forward, sprang with-  
in the old church door,  
Left the old man coming slowly, paths he'd trod so  
oft before.  
Not one moment paused the maiden, but, with  
cheek and brow aglow,  
Staggered up the gloomy tower, where the bell  
swung to and fro;  
Then she climbed the slimy ladder, dark without  
one ray of light,  
Upward still, her pale lips saying, "Curfew shall  
not ring to-night."

She has reached the topmost ladder; o'er her hangs  
the great dark bell;  
And the awful gloom beneath her, like the path-  
way down to hell.  
See! the ponderous tongue is swinging; 'tis the  
hour of curfew now;  
And the sight has chilled her bosom, stopped her  
breath and paled her brow.  
Shall she let it ring? No; never! Her eyes flash  
with sudden light,  
As she springs and grasps it firmly: "Curfew  
shall not ring to-night."

Out she swung—far out; the city seemed a tiny  
speck below—  
There, twixt heaven and earth, suspended, as the  
bell swung to and fro;  
And the half-deaf sexton ringing (years he had not  
heard the bell);  
And he thought the twilight curfew rang young  
Basil's funeral knell;  
Still the maiden, clinging firmly, cheek and brow  
so pale and white,  
Stilled her frightened heart's wild beating; "Cur-  
few shall not ring to-night."

It was o'er; the bell ceased swaying; and the  
maiden stepped once more  
Firmly on the damp old ladder, where, for hundred  
years before,  
Human foot had not been planted; and what she  
this night had done

Should be told long ages after. As the rays of set-  
ting sun  
Light the sky with mellow beauty, aged sires, with  
heads of white,  
Tell the children why the curfew did not ring that  
one sad night.

O'er the distant hills came Cromwell; Bessie saw  
him, and her brow,  
Lately white with sickening horror, glows with  
sudden beauty now;  
At his feet she told her story, showed her hands  
all bruised and torn;  
And her sweet young face so haggard, with a look  
so sad and worn,  
Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes  
with misty light;  
"Go! your lover lives," cried Cromwell. "Curfew  
shall not ring to-night."

## The Story of a Dream.

My only sister, Edith, married when I was  
scarcely six years of age. My mother died soon  
after that event, so I was left at home with my  
father and brothers. My father said I resembled  
my mother, and I think loved me better than any-  
thing on earth. The boys, too, indulged me in  
every whim. I don't think I had a wish ungratified.  
They said I was pretty, and in my youthful  
vanity I imagined myself beautiful. Ah, me!  
those happy days of my bright girlhood, when I  
was careless and light-hearted, dreading no evil  
because knowing none, are even now a pleasant  
memory to me.

My sister lived at some distance from home; ab-  
sorbed in the cares of her family she rarely visited  
us, but I spent nearly half of my time at Ellengeon,  
the name of my mother-in-law's place. I was  
deeply attached to my sister and her children, and  
I found a dear friend in the person of her gover-  
ness, Miss Gray. She was a fragile, golden-haired  
creature, with tender, intensely mournful, brown  
eyes, the saddest eyes I had ever seen; she was so  
fair and slight as to look almost childish notwith-  
standing her five-and-twenty years.

I liked her from the first; but she was very shy,  
and it was some time before my childish overtures  
of friendship met with any response; and even  
when we had grown to love each other, she still  
maintained an impenetrable reserve concerning her  
early life. She received no letters, avoided all  
society, and appeared to have a morbid terror of  
strangers. I had a girl's curiosity; but Miss Gray  
never spoke of herself, and answered all questions  
with a gentle reserve that was more repelling than  
rudeness. Ever ready to sympathize in the  
troubles of others, she never spoke of her own  
griefs—and griefs I was convinced she had. I de-  
termined that the owner of those sad, brown eyes  
had a history; but my sister laughed at what she  
termed my romantic notions. Miss Gray had come  
to her highly recommended; she was devoted to  
her little charges; there Edith's interest in her  
governess ended.

I was twenty when I first met Rupert Gordon.  
For two years I had reigned as a belle, and as yet  
my life had never known grief. The first time I  
looked upon his face, the first time I listened to  
the persuasive music of his voice, I loved him—  
loved him with all the mad recklessness of a head-  
strong girl's first love; I saw that he was hand-  
some, and my fancy endowed him with a thousand  
heroic attributes; then I knelt and blindly wor-  
shipped my idol. Oh, the passionate fervor, the  
deep, trusting tenderness lavished upon that  
shrine! I could scarcely believe in the reality of  
my happiness when he confessed his love and asked  
me to be his wife—his wife. I would have been  
contented to be his slave.

Surely the course of true love never did flow  
smoother than did ours. Rupert was all that was  
desirable; my father heartily approved of my  
choice; the relations on both sides were highly  
pleased; so it was settled that we were to be mar-  
ried at once.

The few months of my engagement passed rapid-  
ly away, and the time of my marriage drew near.  
Edith was unable to come to us until the day be-  
fore the wedding, and by my particular request  
Miss Gray and the children were to accompany her.

Now, it was one of my peculiarities that I never  
dreamed; but at this time, for three nights in suc-  
cession, I dreamed precisely the same thing. I  
thought I was clasped in Rupert's arms, close to  
his heart, and my happiness was complete; then  
Miss Gray, her pale face wet with tears, came and  
begged me to leave him. I could not account for  
it, but she inspired me with great terror, and I  
clung more closely to my lover. Gently, her sad

eyes gazing pitifully into mine, her ice-cold hands  
retained me, she loosed my clinging arms, and I  
saw Rupert vanish from me, and knew that he  
would never be my own again. Then I awoke.

The 17th of May was to be my wedding day.  
On the 16th Edith and her family arrived. After  
lunch that day I took Miss Gray up to my room to  
show her my wedding presents and trousseau. I  
was excited and more than happy as I tried on my  
wedding dress and peeped into the glass to see the  
effect.

Miss Gray, in her quiet, gentle way, was almost  
as excited as I. She listened to all my praises of  
my lover, and rejoiced in my happiness as though  
I had been her sister.

I was still standing before the mirror in my  
bridal robes, when Miss Gray, who was standing at  
the window, gave a sharp cry of pain and turned  
to me with such a ghastly face that I was fright-  
ened.

"Who is that? Oh, tell me who is that?" she  
grasped.

I looked out and saw Rupert coming up the  
avenue. My Rupert, with his happy, careless face.  
"That is Rupert, Miss Gray. Have you seen  
him before? Are you ill?" I asked, for she trem-  
bled like an aspen leaf.

She answered that she had mistaken him for a  
person she had known long ago; she was not very  
well; she would go to her room and rest a little  
while. Then she left me and I hurried to meet my  
lover.

About ten minutes later I sought Rupert in the  
library. As I descended the stairs I heard voices,  
and on approaching the door I heard Rupert say:  
"I thought you were dead," in low, constrained  
tones; then I entered quickly. Rupert stood by  
the window ghastly pale. Opposite, with a strange  
anguish in her eyes, was Miss Gray. I went di-  
rectly to him. At my approach he trembled con-  
vulsively.

"Rupert," I said, "tell me what troubles you."  
"Without a word he clasped me in his arms,  
and leaning his head upon my breast, burst into  
tears, sobbing like a child.

"Maud, come away; this man is my husband,"  
I heard Miss Gray say.

Her voice sounded like one speaking from a dis-  
tance. My Rupert another woman's husband?  
Was she mad?

"It is not true!" I cried; "It is not true!  
Rupert, dearest, speak to me and say it is not  
true."

"Heaven help me; it is true," he moaned.

Then for a moment I thought my brain was on  
fire. I was mad with pain and passion; I could  
not reason; I only knew that I loved him; I could  
not live without him. In my agony I shrieked  
aloud:

"Rupert, do not leave me! She cannot love  
you as I do! Oh, Rupert it will make no differ-  
ence! I love you—I love you!"

I heard Miss Gray's pleading voice, but I turned  
from her with loathing. Then mocking faces  
floated around me; Edith's tearful, my father's  
grave and pitiful, the boys' entreating; but my na-  
ture seemed changed in my despair, for I hated  
them all fiercely; were they not trying to separate  
me from my idol? A great black veil seemed en-  
veloping him, hiding him from me even as I held  
him. Then the darkness engulfed me, and insensibility  
came to my relief.

For weeks I lay at the gates of death, and  
throughout my long illness Mary Gray attended  
me like a sister. When I regained strength she  
told me the story of her life, the romance that as  
a heedless girl, I longed to know.

She had been governess to Rupert's sister when  
he was almost a boy. He fancied he loved her,  
and she loved him with all the earnestness of her  
nature. Yielding to his entreaties she consented  
to a private marriage. Then before many months  
had passed, she found that her young husband had  
already tired of her devotion, and longed to regain  
his freedom. Poor Mary! At first, she said the  
agony of the discovery had almost killed her; but  
at last she resolved to be a burthen to him no  
longer. During his absence she left the house,  
leaving a note for him to tell him that he was free.  
She came to my sister, and as the years rolled on  
Rupert persuaded himself that she was dead.

Mary Gray and I, both hopelessly loving Rupert  
Gordon as women can love but once in their lives,  
formed the covenant of friendship which has lasted  
even until now.

I saw Rupert but once again. On his death bed  
he called for me, and I went to him. He died  
with his hands clasped in mine, and his dear head  
pillowed on my breast.