

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
gasped.

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 insensi-
bility 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.