

## The Family Circle.

### ONE AT A TIME.

One step at a time, and that well-placed,  
We reach the grandest height;  
One stroke at a time, earth's hidden stores  
Will slowly come to light;  
One seed at a time, and the forest grows;  
One drop at a time, and the river flows  
Into the boundless sea.

One word at a time, and the greatest book  
Is written and is read;  
One stone at a time, a palace rears  
Aloft its stately head;  
One blow at a time, and the tree's cleft through,  
And a city will stand where the forest grew  
A few short years before.

One foe at a time, and he subdued,  
And the conflict will be won;  
One grain at a time, and the sands of life  
Will slowly all be run.  
One minute, another, the hours fly;  
One day at a time, and our lives speed by  
Into eternity.

One grain of knowledge, and that well stored,  
Another, and more on them,  
And as time rolls on your mind will shine  
With many a garnered gem  
Of thought and wisdom. And time will tell.  
"One thing at a time, and that done well,"  
Is wisdom's proven rule.

—Golden Days.

(All Rights Reserved.)

### MARJORIE'S CANADIAN WINTER.

BY AGNES MAULE MACHAR.

#### CHAPTER II.—CONTINUED.

'My father—unprepared!' exclaimed Marjorie, too much shocked to say more.

'Yes,' replied Nettie decidedly; 'every one's unprepared if they're not converted, you know: and mother says she's sure he's never been converted.'

'I don't think your mother knows anything about it, then,' said Marjorie, indignantly.

'Marjorie Fleming! aren't you ashamed? My mother knows all about such things. She says she can always tell when a person's converted,' exclaimed Nettie, aggrieved in her turn.

'Well, she doesn't know much about my father; and I don't think you ought to say such things to me,' said Marjorie, trying hard to repress the tears that she would not on any account have let Nettie see.

'Yes, I ought,' persisted Nettie, 'because you ought to pray for him every day—that he mightn't die till he was converted, for you know that would be dreadful!'

'Nettie Lane, I just wish you would mind your own business!' almost sobbed out Marjorie, who could bear no more; and without another word she turned the corner quickly, and almost ran till she was safe within her own door. And then, when she had got into her own little room, she gave way to the fit of grief and indignant crying that she could no longer keep down.

It was intensely wounding both to her pride and to her affection, to hear Nettie talk in such a flippant, unfeeling fashion, of the father she so passionately loved and revered. And to be told that she ought to pray for her father's recovery—when she had been praying so earnestly morning, noon and night that he might be restored to health. And under all the rest lay an uneasy misgiving lest there might be some truth in what Mrs. Lane had said. She knew how Mrs. Lane was looked up to as an 'eminent Christian'—a leader in all good works; and if she said such a thing, she must think it; and how could Marjorie tell what this mysterious 'being converted' meant? And she knew that her father was not a very regular attendant at church, and that in some other respects he was not just like some of the people that Nettie, on her mother's authority, called 'real Christians.' But then she remembered what he had said about many people being 'half-heathens,' and how he had spoken to her about the 'light that shineth in darkness.' She felt perplexed and bewildered; and it was a great comfort to her when Dr. Stone's neat little equipage drove up to the door, and the brisk, cheery little doctor brightened her up by his hopeful, encouraging words about her dear father.

'I've told him he can leave his room and take tea with you to-night,' he said. 'A little

change will be good for him now; only take care to have a good fire; and keeping the temperature of the room very even,' was his parting injunction.

How good it was to see her father once more in his own easy-chair by the fire, and to see that, though still weak and pale, he looked so much like himself, and smiled so cheerfully at all the little preparations for his comfort, while he also expressed his satisfaction in his own way.

'Why, Marjorie,' he said, 'you and Rebecca will spoil me altogether, if you coddle up like this,' and he bent over to kiss his excited child, thinking how much she looked like her mother just then. She had forgotten for the time, all about the disquietude of the afternoon; but by and by it came back to her when tea was over and she sat down by her father, who seemed disinclined to try to read yet. It was Friday evening, so that she did not need to learn her lessons till next day.

'Well, Marjorie, what subject are you considering so deeply?' asked Mr. Fleming, watching her preoccupied and absent air as she gazed into the fire and stroked Robin's shaggy locks. Marjorie had often wondered at her father's power of divining her moods and tenses, as he used to call them, and she was not sorry to have an opportunity of unburdening her mind a little to the only person who, she felt, could give her any light on the subject. So she looked up, and asked shyly: 'Papa—what does it mean, exactly—to "be converted"?''

'To be turned round from the wrong to the right,' he replied.

'Is that all?' she asked in surprise. 'I thought it meant—to have a new heart. Were you ever converted, father?' she added, finding no way of getting at what she wanted, except the direct question.

'What has Nettie Lane been saying to you, dear?' Mr. Fleming asked, with one of his scrutinizing looks and a light smile.

'Why, father, how could you know?' she asked in startled surprise.

'I can put things together,' he said quietly. 'I know Mrs. Lane's ideas pretty well, and I can guess her opinion of me. She is one of the Christians who forget that their Master has said, "Judge not," and who doesn't understand any one's being religious if it isn't in their own way. She is a good woman, and honestly tries to do good, but, like many other good people, she is apt to make mistakes when she tries to judge others.'

'I knew you were religious, father; but I don't understand about being converted.'

'Well, my dear child, I don't want you to mistake me, and I think the best way to answer your question will be to tell you something of my own experience and my own mistakes. It may save you from some, and I should like to tell you more about myself than I have ever done yet. I have been very ill, you know, dear, and in all these quiet hours and days that I have been laid aside—not knowing whether I should ever come back to my old life again—I have been thinking a good deal about my own past, and of things I have been led to see, that once I did not see.'

Marjorie's eyes had filled with tears as her father referred, in his still weak voice, to that terrible possibility, and then, with quick anxiety, as she asked if it would not tire him too much. And Rebecca came in to enforce the necessity of Mr. Fleming saving his strength, and not wearing himself out with too much talking yet, a truth which the fatigue he already felt obliged him to admit. So what he wanted to tell Marjorie was postponed, and eager as she was to hear it, she cheerfully settled down to read to him the newly arrived papers, and some things that especially interested him in the last unopened number of the periodical with which he was connected.

The next evening an old friend from the city office came in to see him, and he and Dr. Stone had a little private talk with Mr. Fleming while Marjorie finished her lessons, for once, in her own room. Sunday was a lovely day for November—almost spring-like in its mildness—and Mr. Fleming was downstairs to give Marjorie a pleasant surprise when she came home from church. This un-

expected pleasure made her forget what she had been going to tell him, until her return from Sunday-school, as the early dusk was closing in.

'Oh, father! we needn't have the lights in yet?' she asked eagerly, for the warm glow of the firelight was so inviting, and Marjorie liked nothing better than a twilight talk with her father on Sunday evening.

'No, dear; I have read as much as I care to read, just now, and I would rather go on with the talk we began the other evening.'

Marjorie gladly settled herself down in her low chair by his side, and Robin stretched himself contentedly at their feet. Then, with a sudden recollection, she exclaimed:

'O, papa! what do you think was the text this morning? It was a stranger that preached, and I don't know his name, but his text was: "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Wasn't it odd?'

'Not very,' replied her father. 'You would never have noticed the text, specially if it hadn't been for our talk about it. Well, can you tell me any of the sermon?'

'He said, for one thing, that Christ lighted every man that came into the world, and that meant, that he gave them light enough to walk by, if they would take it. And then he said just what you said that evening, about our hearts being so full of darkness that the light often shone in the midst of it without being able to drive it away; and that even good people often had a great deal more darkness in their hearts than they knew.'

Marjorie had been accustomed to have to bring home reports of the sermons she heard when her father was not with her, and partly in this way she had acquired the habit of listening with attention, and carrying away leading thoughts in her mind.

'Yes,' said Mr. Fleming, 'that is only too true. "Lighten our darkness" is perhaps the prayer we all need most. But then if we are only sincere in trying to walk in the light we have, we shall have more light. It has always seemed inexpressibly touching to me that those words, "more light," should have been the last on the great Goethe's dying lips. With all the light his splendid intellect and vast knowledge could give him, "more light" was, he felt, what he needed most. It seems sad, too, that he could not, while he lived, have seen the true "Light of the World." But pride and selfishness are terribly blinding powers.'

'Well, father,' said Marjorie, much less interested in Goethe than in himself, 'you said you were going to tell me about yourself.'

'Yes, darling, and so I will. Well, I was a long time in getting to see that true Light, and that gives me more patience with others. You know that I was born and brought up in Scotland, thought I left it as soon as I had finished my university course. My parents were good people, but very strict in their ideas—my father especially so—and very sure that what they had been taught to believe was the exact truth, and everything different must be wrong. From people about me I got the idea that certain beliefs were a necessary part of Christianity, which I now believe people got out of the darkness of their own hearts, and not out of the Bible—beliefs which are certainly quite consistent with the blessed truth that "God is Love," and which, I think, taught them to be hard and unloving and unforgiving, as they fancied God was. I was too much of a boy—too lazy and careless about such things—to study the Bible for myself, and see what Christ and his apostles really taught. And so, first I grew to dread and dislike the very name of God, and everything that reminded me of One whom I never thought of loving, but only, but only of fearing. And then as I grew older, and met with other young men, and read more, I was very easily persuaded that religion was all a superstition—because some things I had been taught could not be true—and that it was impossible, even if there was a God, that we could ever understand him, or could ever know whether he existed or not.'

'That's what you call an Agnostic, isn't it, papa? Mrs. Lane thinks they are dreadful people, but they can't be, if you were ever one,' said Marjorie, impulsively.

They are very much to be pitied, at any

rate,' he said, 'for wandering in darkness when there is light. And often it is not so much their fault as that of the Christians who pervert or misrepresent Christianity. I was unfortunate, too, in some friends of whom, at one time, I saw a good deal—people who are very earnest and devoted Christians, but seemed to care for nothing in life that was not distinctly religious. Art, science, even philanthropic reforms, they seemed to think unworthy of a Christian's attention. There was for them only one interest—that which they call "salvation," and they seemed to care little even for other people, unless they thought as they did. Now I thought, and truly enough, that if there was a God, he was the God of nature as well as of religion, and that he must have created all man's faculties and intended him to use them; and so the narrowness of these really good people only confirmed me in my idea that religion is only a superstition. And I took these stunted, dwarfed specimens—stunted and dwarfed by the perversity and narrowness of human nature—for the natural fruits of the tree of Christianity, and thought that I was thus judging the tree by its fruits.'

'Well, as I said, I came to America just after my university course, when your Uncle Ramsy married my eldest sister, and came out to settle in Montreal. I had very exalted ideas on the subject of human freedom, and I thought that republican institutions and the growth of humanity would right every evil under the sun. But I soon found that even these were by no means perfect; that abuses and selfish oppressions and many other evils seemed to spring up, like weeds from the soil. As a young writer, trying to make my way, I had a hard time of it, and many experiences that gradually led me into very pessimistic, that is, hopeless views of humanity, and I was feeling very, very miserable and dejected, when—I met your dear mother.'

Marjorie's eyes followed the direction of her father's—to the sweet face in the picture. Both were silent for a few moments.

Then Mr. Fleming continued: 'To me, in my depressed state of mind, she seemed a very angel of consolation. And when I found that she loved me, and was willing to share my not very brilliant prospects, life seemed to blossom anew for me. It seemed as if now I had found the true light of life, and for a time it was all I wanted.'

'But it was not all she wanted. I had purposely avoided saying anything to her about the faith in which I knew she implicitly believed. I went to church—though not very regularly—and she knew I was serious and earnest in my ideas and in my life; that I worked with all my heart for what seemed to me for the good of man, and I think that even while she had a misgiving that her faith was not mine, she still hoped that it was, and when she could no longer even hope this, she still hoped that it yet would be.'

Marjorie sat listening with intense interest. She had never heard much of her dead mother except from her Aunt Millie, and this opening of her father's heart and life to her, was a far more precious gift than any other he could have bestowed on her. Mr. Fleming spoke slowly and thoughtfully—almost as if thinking aloud—now and then pausing, as if the time he was speaking about was present still.

'As our happy married life went on,' he continued, 'and your mother's nature matured and deepened, her true, spiritual faith grew deeper and stronger also. She did what I had never done—studied the Bible daily and thoughtfully, with a loving and childlike heart, and remember, Marjorie darling, it is only love that "comprehendeth love." Without this, it is no wonder so many critics should miss the very heart and core of revelation. But as her love and faith grew stronger, she grew more sensitive to my lack of sympathy with either, and I well know it was a great and growing sorrow to her. I always put the subject aside as gently as I could when it came up, for by that time my will was set against believing; but I felt the wistful pain in her face in spite of myself. Then our first baby died, and I knew that in that sorrow her one consolation was that which I could not share; and this seemed to make a separation between us, just when sorrow should have drawn us closest. She was never very strong, and I think this double sorrow undermined her health so much that, shortly after your birth I lost her, as I then thought, forever!'

(To be continued.)