

near him." She still went about her simple duties, gave patient heed to her gentle charities, and waited. Every afternoon found her with her Bible seated before the west window.

"Lift back the curtain, child," she would say to me, forgetting my two and twenty years, and then while she read aloud, softly, fervently, I crept to the table and busied myself among my books until the shadows came between her old eyes and the page, then would I light our lamp and draw her to her place before the fire, striving by merry talk to draw her thoughts from the vacant place the other side the hearth.

One day as she sat thus at her reading, I heard her sigh, and saw her lay the open book page up, upon her knee. Next she removed her spectacles, wiped the glasses with the corner of her apron, and laid them upon the open page, repeating softly all the while the words she had last read:—

"The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The sun dropped behind the Western hills, and after awhile I got up and went to her.

A smile still wreathed the faded lips, as if somewhere the waiting spirit had encountered that other waiting one, and both gone smiling into peace.

Down on the open page I saw where the gilded rim of her spectacles marked the text:

"The path of the just is as a shining light," and reading on I knew that Grandmother Gray had passed "unto the perfect day."

THE HOME CIRCLE.

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE.

The two kinds of people on earth I ween
Are the people who lift and the people who lean.

Wherever you go you will find the world's masses
Are always divided in just these two classes.

And, oddly enough, you will find, too, I ween,
There is only one lifter to twenty who lean.

In which class are you? Are you easing the load
Of overtaxed lifters who toil down the road?

Or are you a leaner, who lets others bear
Your portion of labor and worry and care?

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

A PARABLE.

BY GEORGE MACDONALD.

It is a cold winter forenoon, with the snow upon everything out-of-doors. The mother has gone out for the day, and the children are amusing themselves in the nursery,—pretending to make such things men make. But there is one among them who joins in their amusement only by fits and starts. He is pale and restless, yet inactive. His mother is away. True, he is not well. But he is not very unwell; and if she were at home he would take his share in everything that was going on, with as much enjoyment as any of them. But as it is, his fretfulness and pettishness make no allowance for the wilfulness of his brothers and sisters; and so the confusions they make in the room carry confusion into his heart and brain, till at length a brighter noon entices the others out into the snow.

Glad to be left alone, he seats himself by the fire and tries to read. But the book he was so delighted with yesterday is dull to-day. He looks up at the clock and sighs, and wishes his mother would come home. Again he betakes himself to his book, and the story transports his imagination to the great icebergs on the polar sea. But the sunlight has left them, and they no longer gleam and glitter and sparkle, as if spangled with all the jewels of the hot tropics, but shine cold and threatening as they tower over the ice-bound ship. He lays down the tale, and takes up a poem. But it, too, is frozen. The rhythm will not flow. And the sad feeling arises in his heart, that it is not so very beautiful, after all, as he had used to think it.

"Is there anything beautiful?" says the poor boy at length, and wanders to the window. But the sun is under a cloud; cold, white, and cheerless, like death, lies the wide world out of doors; and the prints of his mother's feet in the snow all point towards the village and away from home. His head aches, and he cannot

eat his dinner. He creeps up stairs to his mother's room. There the fire burns bright, and through the window falls a ray of sunlight. But the fire and the very sunlight are wintry and sad. "Oh, when will mother be home?" He lays himself in a corner, amongst soft pillows, and rests his head; but it is no rest for him, for the covering wings are not there. The bright-colored curtains look dull and gray.

Poor child! Is there any joy in the world? Oh, yes; but it always clings to the mother, and follows her about like a radiance, and she has taken it with her. Oh, when will she be home? The clock strikes as if it meant something, and then straight way goes on again with the old wearisome tic-tac.

To any one else, looking in from the cold, frosty night, the room would appear the very picture of afternoon comfort and warmth; and he, if he were desecrated thus nestling in its softest, warmest nook, would be counted a blessed child, without care, without fear, made for enjoyment, and knowing only fruition. But the mother is gone; and as that flame-lighted room would appear to the passing eye, with the fire and with but a single candle to thaw the surrounding darkness and cold, so is that child's heart without the presence of the mother.

Worn out at length with loneliness and mental want, he closes his eyes, and after the slow lapse of a few more empty moments, re-opens them on the dusky ceiling and the gray twilight window; no—on two eyes near above him, and beaming upon him, the stars of a higher and holier heaven than that which looks in through the unshaded windows. They are the eyes of the mother, looking closely and anxiously on her sick boy.

"Mother! Mother!" His arms cling around her neck, and pull down her face to his.

His head aches still, but the heart-ache is gone. When candles are brought, and the chill night is shut out of doors and windows and the children are all gathered around the tea-table, laughing and happy, no one is happier, though he does not laugh, than the sick child, who lies on the couch and looks at his mother. Everything around is full of interest and use, glorified by the radiation of her presence. Nothing can go wrong. The splendor returns to the tale and the poem. Sickness cannot make him wretched. Now, when he closes his eyes, his spirit dares to go forth wandering under the shining stars and above the sparkling snow; and nothing is any more dull and unbeautiful. When night draws on, and he is laid in his bed, her voice sings him, and her hand sooths him to sleep; nor do her influences vanish when he forgets everything in sleep; for he wakes in the morning well and happy, made whole by his faith in his mother.

Brothers, sisters! do I not know your hearts, from my own?—sick hearts, which nothing can restore to health and enjoyment but the presence of Him who is Father and mother both in one. Sunshine is not gladness, because you see Him not. The stars are far away, because He is not near; and the flowers, the smiles of old Earth, do not make you smile, because, although, thank God! you cannot get rid of the child's need, you have forgotten what it is the need of. The winter is dreary and dull, because, although you have the homeliest home, and warmest of shelters, the safest of nests to creep into and rest,—though the most cheerful of fires is blazing for you and a table is spread, waiting to refresh your frozen and weary hearts,—you have forgot the way thither, and will not be troubled to ask the way, you shiver with the cold and hunger, rather than arise and say, "I will go to my Father;" you will die in the snow rather than fight the storm; you will lie down in the storm rather than tread it under foot. The heart within you cries out for something, and you let it cry. It is crying for its God,—for its father and mother and home. And all the world will look dull and gray,—and if it does not look so now, the day will come when it must look so,—till heart is satisfied and quieted with the known presence of Him in whom we live and move and have our being.

Our Lord is like a printer who sets the letters backwards. We see and feel Him set the type well, but we can not read them. When we are printed off yonder in the life to come, we shall read all clear and straight-forward. Meantime we must have patience.—*Luther.*