



The Family Circle.

MY LITTLE BOY THAT DIED.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

Look at his pretty face for just one minute.
His braided frock and dainty buttoned shoes—
His firm-shut hand, the favorite plaything in it—
Then tell me, mothers, was't not hard to lose
And miss him from my side—
My little boy that died?

How many another boy, as dear and charming,
His father's hope, his mother's one delight,
Slips through strange sicknesses, all fear disarming,
And lives a long, long life in parents' sight.
Mine was so short a pride!—
And then—my poor boy died.

I see him rocking on his wooden charger;
I hear him pattering through the house all day;
I catch his great blue eyes grow large and larger,
Listening to stories, whether grave or gay,
He told at the bright fire-side—
So dark now, since he died.

But yet I often think my boy is living,
As living as my other children are.
When good-night kisses I all round am giving,
I keep one for him, though he is so far.
Can a mere grave divide
Me from him—though he died?

So, while I come and plant it o'er with daisies—
(Nothing but childish daisies all year round)—
Continually God's hand the curtain raises
And I can hear his merry voice's sound,
And feel him at my side
My little boy that died.
—Good Words.

SET TO MUSIC!

"If I could only be set to music!" Robie Lynn was alone with her music teacher when she said these words. Now Robie loved music above anything else that she knew of. She found comfort and company in the yellow keys of the old piano, for there appeared to be some magic, secret understanding between them and her tender fingers. Her mother used to say that it seemed as though she had an oriole shut up in her throat. So this hour when she took her music lesson was the joy of her life. For that hour she was unmindful if the children did come clawing round the keyhole; unmindful if scuffling in the passage proved that they were being borne off, curiosity and all, by force of circumstances over which they had no control. For that hour she was oblivious, though impertinently familiar odors of vegetables that Aunt Lament fancied and Robie abominated mingled freely with the atmosphere of the back-parlor by convivance of the aforesaid key-hole. Her teacher took great pains with Robie, and liked to increase all she could the charm which the hour had for her. She knew that Robie did not have many good times. Her father loved "his little lame chicken," as he called her, but his business was one that often took him from home for weeks at a time. The mother was dead, and Aunt Lament—good, capable, busy Aunt Lament—divided herself round, the best way she could, among the babies, who were all younger than Robie, with healthy lungs to scream lustily for what they wanted, stout legs to tug unweariedly round the house after her, and insatiable stomachs to cry always, "More! more!" Besides Robie's lameness she had a delicacy of constitution which barred her still more from the freedom and fun of most children. There were many days when she felt languid and ill without knowing why, days when she was sadly fretful at the children's noise, could not think what to do with herself, and even sat moping or crying by the hour till

Aunt Lament, having scolded in vain, was at her wit's end.

But a very different girl from this was the Robie who sat erect on the high music-stool, feeling her way through grand chords under Miss Compton's skilful guidance.

Her eyes were shining; her face glowed, and as she caught the thread of the melody, her teacher marvelled at the quick instinct with which she followed it through. Something in its stately stepping appealed peculiarly to her sensitive ear; she felt how the rhythm of the words throbbed perfectly with the rhythm of the air to which they were set. But Miss Compton rose to go, and then, coming painfully back to the realization of the crippled foot and the children at the key-hole, and the intrusive odors of approaching dinner, she cried out impulsively: "Oh, if I could only be set to music!"

Miss Compton's voice had a blithe and hearty ring in it as she answered quickly:

"Well, Robie, what's to hinder? When you read of noble lives, don't it make you feel stirred and inspired as if by music?"

Robie blushed.

"Oh! I know, Miss Compton, no sort of a tune could be made out of me. I'm cross, and sick, and not good for anything in particular; and as to being happy—"

Miss Compton looked tenderly at her pale little scholar and said very gently:—

"That is a pity, because it need not be so. You can set your life to music if you will."

Robie opened wondering eyes.

"You can't think what I mean? Well, now, try. The best way to learn how to do anything is to do it. Try to make a little song of every day. Each day brings work for you to take up and duties for you to do. Think of every one of these as one of the notes that together will round into the whole sweet melody. And, dear Robie, you are not making up this tune as you go along—that is the beauty of it—it is the Master himself who has composed it; so you can be sure that there is not one note misplaced, one note too many or too few. For His sake try to get it right; let it be an honor to Him. Be faithful with every part of that which is given you to do, whatever it may be, and put your heart into it as you put it into your music. Thus you will set your life to music and make it a song in the ears of the Lord, as He meant it should be."

"It sounds so pleasant!" Robie said wistfully. "I never should have thought of such a thing. But I don't quite understand how, after all. If you were only here all the time, Miss Compton, to show me how as I go along—the way you do about my music!"

While she spoke they both heard the emphatic insistent ring of the telephone bell, and it suggested a sudden idea to Miss Compton.

"When you get puzzled, Robie," said she, "suppose you ask me about it through the telephone? Perhaps in that way I can explain what I mean to you as you 'go along.'"

Robie clapped her hands. She had few interests; this would be very diverting.

Miss Compton touched the piano keys. She sang, to an impromptu air,

"Be good, sweet child, and let who will be clever;
Do noble deeds, not dream them, all day long;
And make of life, death and the vast forever
One grand, sweet song."

Leaving these words to echo in Robie's memory, she gave her a merry pat on the head and whisked off, for on lesson days she was always hurried.

However, the next day was not a lesson day. Miss Compton sat at her sewing, and smiled because the telephone bell rang so often.

"Miss Compton," Robie's first message was, "Aunt Lament says I spend too much time with my music, and she wants me to study more arithmetic and geography. Is it wrong to like music so much better?"

"No," said the answer that returned to listening Robie, "but the other things are duties, too, and you must not slight any one for another. It will spoil the tune, you know, if you do not give each half, whole and quarter note its due time."

Presently the bell tapped again.

"Then do you think I ought to make a regular plan and set off so much time for music, so much for study, so much for sewing?"

"I think it would be a good thing. It

would be like keeping time and minding the beat."

"But how can you possibly make out," asked the next message, "that darned stockings has anything to do with it?"

"Every note counts, remember. And everything that is done with perfection has a grace about it that makes it deserve to be called harmonious. Yes, even darned stockings! So try to darn them beautifully, dear."

Again the question came:—

"I get dreadfully cross with the children, they are so teasing, and they do quarrel so. Do you think children are much but discords?"

"Try to forget yourself and think of something to amuse the restless little things. You will get interested in their quarrels, even in helping them out of the quarrels. It is selfishness that makes discords. Sing true, my child, sing true."

Later Robie said, "My head has begun to ache, and when Mrs. Apsley came to take me for a drive I couldn't go. I'm so disappointed. You don't think I can make any music out of that, do you?"

"You'll see further on in the tune. I think it is like the flats and sharps in your new Lieders. The flats and sharps are all arranged right to make the whole melody beautiful, though if you separate them from each other the sounds appear discordant. I believe that some day you will own the very sweetest music of all has been drawn from disappointment and trials. Many other people have owned it before you."

"What, Miss Compton, can that come true about my lame foot?"

"I am sure of it; you wait and see. Our troubles bring out the deep chords that we shouldn't know were in us otherwise."

At night it was Miss Compton's turn to ring Robie's bell. "Now that it is bedtime," said she, "tell me Robie, hasn't it been a happier day, and don't you like this well enough to keep on setting yourself to music?"

"It has been better," Robie answered, "and, yes, I like to try. But I have had you to help me to-day, and that has made such a difference. I can't have you always, and then what shall I do? I'm afraid I can't do much all by myself."

Then the reply came quickly back:—

"Ah, dear child! do you suppose, then, if you can speak right into my ears through the telephone, that you can't speak right into the ears of God?"—*Christian Union.*

THE WATCHMAN AND THE STRANGER.

BY HELEN PEARSON BARNARD.

When the hum of business had ceased, the evening shadows had fallen, and the city lamps were lighted—then began the duties of Captain Earnshaw, a private night-watch. Everyone in the square of which he had charge will remember the stately man of military bearing, who was so vigilant and faithful; no unlocked door, no gas left burning by careless clerk, escaped his eye.

"If Earnshaw owned the square, he wouldn't be more careful," was often said.

The captain's heart glowed with pride at the compliments he received—very substantial ones at Christmas from some of the merchants whom he served.

Late one summer evening as he was pacing the square, he heard footsteps approaching. It was seldom that anyone passed through these business streets at night, except an officer or some drunken person mistaken in his way. The captain paused in the shadow. Soon a tall figure passed under a lamp, a little distance off, but the keen eye of the watch had scanned his dress and knew that he was not an officer. He was a stranger, apparently, for he was looking from right to left as if doubtful of his course. When he reached the captain he paused.

"Are you an officer, friend, and will you direct one who was never before in your city?"

The quaint address and deep rich voice were peculiarly winning. He appeared like a clergyman, but his shabby dress and sailor-like bundle puzzled Captain Earnshaw.

"What do you want at this time o' night?" was the gruff response.

"I came on a coasting schooner," returned the stranger, adding with great simplicity, "Do you know Andrew Smith? I go to his house to-night."

Captain Earnshaw would have smiled, but could not before that benign countenance with the flowing patriarchal beard. He told

him respectfully that he did not know Andrew Smith, but if he had the street and number, the stationed police would show him the way.

"Will you permit me to rest a bit on these steps?" asked the old man. "I am too weary to go on."

"Certain," said the watch. "You should have left the schooner earlier, sir; this is no time to enter a strange city."

"I landed before dark," was the reply, "but my Master's business kept me. That is always my first concern."

"I took you to be on your own hook," said the captain. "I should not think he'd expect one of your age to be about wharves after dark. It isn't safe. Desperate characters are there, who come out with the rats and the darkness!"

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."

The stranger repeated this slowly, with mournful emphasis.

"That's Scriptur', I s'pose," said Captain Earnshaw, who had never before heard a text when on duty, "but it's true."

He thought this a pious reflection, but his strange visitor did not seem satisfied, for he said earnestly:—

"I trust that you believe in the Holy Scriptures, friend; all that is written therein is 'upright, even words of truth.'"

The watchman suddenly thought he had "better be moving on." When he came around again the old man was asleep.

"Why, sir, you'll be robbed and murdered yet!" cried the captain, arousing him.

"My Master cares for me," was the calm reply. "I sleep unharmed among the violent. They care not for my treasures—my Bible and these tracts," lifting his bundle, "but sometimes they listen a moment, so I go among them. On the sea-coast I am well known; they call me Father Gwynn. When they are in trouble I comfort them with God's Word. I preach on land and sea to those who do not go to church. I have no home but there is always a place to lay my head, and that is more than my blessed Master had, for it is written, 'The Son of man hath not where to lay His head.'"

Captain Earnshaw was silent.

"I talked on the wharf to-night with men that had never heard of Christ. Perhaps good seed was sown. In a few days I hope to return to the coast," then suddenly raising his eyes to the motionless guard, he said, "I must ask after your soul's welfare, friend! The Lord led me to you for some wise purpose."

All the unbelief in his listener's heart burst forth.

"So you think it's the Lord's doings? Now, I say, you chanced to cross my beat when I was civil. But we all look at things differently; it'll be the same in the end!"

"My friend, you are greatly mistaken!" returned Father Gwynn. "It makes an eternity's difference whether one has the right belief or not. You are a watchman, I presume?"

This introduced the captain's favorite topic. With visible pride he told how he had guarded the square for twelve years.

"There's millions o' property here, sir, and the buildings are all in my charge. Nothing has happened since I took the position!"

"Have you had no robberies?"

"No, sir!" said the night-watch, with emphasis. "They've had them in other parts of the city, but I keep on the move, and if any suspicious persons appear, I call the police."

"Have there been no fires in all these years?"

"Not here. I'm on the watch, you see!"

The stranger's next question was solemn and searching.

"Have you returned thanks for this long season of prosperity?"

"Why should I?" replied Captain Earnshaw almost angrily. "Haven't I been careful and faithful, never sleeping at my post? Why should I thank the Lord for my own prudence?"

Father Gwynn was silent, but his sad, shocked face subdued the other, for he added kindly:—

"But you and I won't quarrel about this. It is now time to go if we would meet the police."

When they parted Father Gwynn said:—

"We may never meet again, friend. I wish I could convince you that God directs the smallest affairs of life. 'Not by might,