

THE HAPPY FAMILY.*

Judith and Hannah were the youngest daughters of a rich Sadducee, who was noted for his zeal in propagating the doctrines of his sect, and success in gaining proselytes thereto.

Judith, who was of a sanguine temperament, and thoughtful disposition, meditated much upon the distracting collisions of the prevailing sects of the day. As uncongenial to her contemplative mind, appeared both the precept and example of the proud Pharisee, as did the dark unknown future of the self-deluded Sadducee.

Hannah was gay and thoughtless, equally regardless of her present and future welfare. Blessed with uninterrupted health, she had seldom thought of, and never duly considered the solemn reality, that all are doomed to die, much less the uncertainty of life, and nearness of death as regarding herself.

But suddenly she was laid on the bed of languishing. For many weeks a fatal sickness preyed upon her decaying frame. Physicians far and near were consulted, but disease bore the palm of victory and prepared the way for the angel of death.

But the unyielding hand of the fell destroyer was not to be robbed of its victim. The irrevocable decree had gone forth, and the angel was on the wing to obey the summons.

A large circle of friends and relatives were gathered round the couch of the dying girl. Successive fainting fits had seized her, and the notes of alarm had been cautiously spread through the dwelling, lest she should be awakened to a sense of the imminent danger.

Judith made no reply. She only pressed her cold hand—wiped the dampness of death from her brow, and to hide the tears of uncontrollable grief, hastily left the apartment.

When she returned, her sister was no more. The vital spark had fled. For a while she indulged in audible strains of grief, with the assembled relatives, at their inconsolable loss; then advancing to the pallid corpse and laying her hand on the cold forehead, she essayed to speak.

In obedience to the Rabbi's signal, the minstrels resumed their melancholy music, and the mourners their dire lamentations.

Two men in the character of messengers, without purse, scrip, or staves, and shod with sandals, entered

the gate leading into the court. They compassionately sought out the cause of her sorrow, and affectionately pointed her to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. They preached unto her Jesus of Nazareth. They spoke of the miracles he had wrought, of the cures he had performed, of his persecutions, crucifixion, and finally of his glorious resurrection from the grave, proving him to be the only Son of God.

Without one cheering ray of hope for the future, the bereaved relatives of Hannah saw her remains consigned to their last resting place. They looked upon the fallen bud of youth as hopelessly as upon the withering petals of her flower-strewn bier.

One day, accompanied by an elder brother, and in deep converse with him, Judith had rambled nearly to the summit of the mountain, when they beheld a multitude ascending it from Jerusalem. Won by her kind entreaties and persuasive appeals, young Benjamin was almost persuaded to embrace the new faith of his sister.

With admiring awe, they still looked into the vast vacancy of unlimited space, till two heaven-commissioned ministers, in white apparel, stood by them, mildly reproving them for their vacant gaze, then announcing in undoubted terms the final re-appearing of their Lord.

While the disciples departed to Jerusalem, Judith and Benjamin silently, but thoughtfully returned to their father's house. Judith related the wondrous miracle to which they had been witnesses, and Benjamin affirmed the truth of her assertions.

Trusting in the God who preserved Daniel in the lion's den, they complacently heard the stern sentence, and obediently retired, each to their lone apartment.

Judith had been but a few days in her place of confinement, when she was summoned to the presence of her father. It was not without trembling fear that she went thither, expecting some further persecution. She even feared banishment from her father's house. But to her surprise she found her father lying on the couch of despair. He had paused in his mad career. The pangs of a guilty conscience now wrung his heart. He had sought the counsel of former friends, but they vainly endeavoured to cheer him on life's dreary journey with the cold counsel, "Live while you live. Cast off your gloomy fears, and seize the pleasures of the present hour."

Unable longer to restrain her feelings, she fell at his feet, bathed them in tears, and in broken accents pleaded her weakness in instructing a parent, and proposed that he should send to Jerusalem for an instructor in the ways of righteousness.

A servant was despatched to the great city, who returned in due time accompanied by the desired teacher. The beloved Apostle in the mild accents of mercy spoke peace to his troubled soul. He failed not to deepen his convictions of the exceeding sinfulness of that sin for which atonement alone could be made by the death of the eternal Son; yet he spoke of that atonement as an all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

The first object of his new-born spirit was to retrieve the errors he had instilled into the minds of his children. Since the previous preaching of the Apostle, they had felt and deeply lamented the depravity of their own hearts, and when assembled in the presence of their father, they were ready to listen to the plan of redemp-

tion, and gladly accepted the offers of pardon. The dark clouds of doubt and fear disappeared, and the gentle rays of eternal sunshine burst upon their enlightened visions. The father, the beloved partner of his heavenly joys, and all his children, each born of the Spirit, were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

A bright halo of celestial happiness encircled the regenerate household as they unitedly bowed to the sceptre of the King of righteousness. The silken cords of holy love entwined around their hearts, and the hallowed boon of peace cemented the golden bonds of charity, and crowned them with the only elements which can constitute the undying joys of the Happy Family.

M. E. M.

The Garner.

REFINEMENT NOT RELIGION.

We will take the case of those who are in better circumstances than the mass of the community. They are well educated and taught; they have few distresses in life, or are able to get over them by the variety of their occupations, by the spirits which attend good health, or at least by the lapse of time. They go on respectably and happily, with the same general tastes and habits which they would have had if the Gospel had not been given them. They have an eye to what the world thinks of them; are charitable when it is expected. They are polished in their manners, kind from natural disposition, or a feeling of propriety. Thus their religion is based upon self and the world, a mere civilization of the mind; and the same (I say), as it would have been in the main, (taking the state of society as they find it,) even supposing Christianity were not the religion of the land. But it is; and let us go on to ask, how do they in consequence feel towards it? They accept it, they add to it what they are, they engrave it upon the selfish and worldly habits of an unregenerate heart. They have been taught to revere it, and to believe its come from God; so they admire it, and accept it as a rule of life, so far forth as it agrees with the carnal principles which govern them. So far as it does not agree, they are blind to its excellence and its claims. They overlook or explain away its precepts. They in no sense obey because it commands. They do right where they would have done right had it not commanded; however, they speak well of it, and think they understand it. Sometimes, if I may continue the description, they adopt it into a certain refined elegance of sentiment and manners, and then their religion is all that is graceful, fastidious, and luxurious. They love religious poetry, and eloquent preaching. They desire to have their feelings roused and soothed, and to secure a variety and relief in that eternal subject which is unchangeable. They tire of its simplicity, and perhaps seek to keep up their interest in it, by means of religious narratives, fictitious or embellished, or of news from foreign countries, or of the history of the prospects or successes of the Gospel; thus perverting what is in itself good and innocent. This is their state of mind at best; for more commonly they think it enough merely to show some slight regard to the subject of religion; to attend its services on the Lord's day, and then only once, and coldly to express an approbation of it. But of course every description of such persons can be but general; for the shades of character are so varied and blended in individuals, as to make it impossible to give an accurate picture, and often very estimable persons and truly good Christians are partly infected with this bad and earthly spirit.—Rev. J. H. Newman.

THE GOOD AND THE WICKED IN TROUBLE.

If we consider the wicked and the good man actually under the weight and pressure of evil, how much unlike is the state of the one in reality to that of the other, even while the outward circumstances are the same! What cheerfulness, what courage, what resignation, what hopes adorn the one! What instruction to all, what satisfaction to his friends and relations does his deportment afford! And how does it inspire and warm the hearts of those that converse with him, with an esteem for, and love of, goodness, and himself! What charm, what delight is there in those gracious speeches, that proceed at this time out of a good man's mouth! I know that my Redeemer liveth; the Lord liveth and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord; Thou of every faithfulness hast caused me to be afflicted: God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever: and such like. And how often does he pour out his heart in secret before God! How often does he reflect on the gracious and wide ends of divine chastisement! And how often does he, with desire and thirst, meditate on thatfulness of joy which expects him in the presence of God! But let us cast our eye now on the voluptuary, on the ambitious, on the covetous, or any sort of sinner, under disgrace, poverty, sickness, or any such calamity; what a mean and despicable figure does such a one make! What impatience, what despondency, what guilt, what pusillanimity, does every word of every action betray! Or, it may be, his violence is turned into crouching and fawning; his rudeness and insolence into artifice and cunning; and his irreligion into superstition. Various indeed are the humours, and very different the carriage of these unhappy men in the day of trial; but all is but misery in a different dress—guilt, and baseness under a different appearance.—Rev. Dr. Lucas.

PROFESSION AND PRACTICE.

If a sober Heathen should come among us, and compare the rules of Christ with the lives of Christians,—the exercise of piety, temperance, and chastity, and all moral virtues commanded by the one in the highest degree, and upon the severest penalties, and impiety, intemperance, lust, and all enormous vices openly and greedily practised by the other,—he would be tempted to believe that the religion of Christ were no more than a pleasing phantasm, wherewith Christians sometimes entertained themselves. An ancient Father, who lived in the declining times of Christianity, tells us, how the heathens, in his age, formed dishonourable thoughts of Christ from the scandalous lives of his disciples: How can he be a good lawyer, that hath no better followers? how can he be an excellent, that do not reform the lives of their professors? And then proceeds to deplore this scandal: Thus we define our most excellent religion, dishonour our Saviour, and blaspheme him in our lives. Let us live up to the rules of our religion, and by a conscientious practice of them, manifest that we are persuaded of the truth of it; otherwise it will be in vain to be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us. This were unanswerably to refute our arguments by our practice, and add to our own condemnation. Let us demonstrate the divinity of our religion, by the influence it hath upon our lives; and profess an entire belief of it by a constant obedience to it: that so we may not fall short of the promises annexed to it; and others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven.—Rev. Henry Wharton.

CHARITY.

Charity, according to St. Paul's definition of it, is a concentration of all those amiable feelings which still characterise our nature, fallen as it is, and of all those mild graces which Christianity has introduced amongst us. It is patience—it is kindness—it is the absence of envy, and of pride of intellect—it is disinterested—it is mildness of disposition—it is harmlessness and unsuspecting confidence—it is fellow-feeling in the welfare of others—it is a readiness to believe and to forgive—and it is a love of peace and unanimity. Not then without reason does the Apostle prefer it even to faith and hope: for if such a comprehensive virtue as this was universally embraced and universally practised amongst us, this world would be itself a paradise, and we should have no occasion to desire another. The effects of faith and hope are confined to the individuals in whom they reside, but the effects of such a charity as this are diffused over all creation. Faith will guide each of us to heaven, and without it there is no admission there; and hope will cheer and invigorate us in our efforts to reach it; but charity will benefit not ourselves only, but all those, with whom in the varied walks of life, we

may chance to meet, or over whom our actions may have any influence. Our faith and hope will save ourselves; but our charity may promote the salvation of others.—Rev. Edward Rice.

MALICE.

A vice so detested by God and man, naturally ranks itself among the blackest works of darkness; and, therefore lurks as deep as it can within the gloomy mind that entertains it. However, this prevents it not from venting itself as often as it is in his power; and when it does it is like the opening of hell. Nothing but pestilential vapours, devouring flames, and devils thirsting for destruction issue from it. It feeds on all the miseries it meets; and when it cannot find misfortunes sufficient to glut its infernal appetite, it makes, and enjoys, them. It holds a general intelligence, that no misfortune may pass by unrejoiced at, not any happiness of others untainted. It enflames old quarrels, it sows the seeds of new ones. A good character is that which gives it the greatest torment; and, therefore, scandal is its favourite instrument, with which, helped out by artifice and cunning it will nurse a groundless insinuation till it swells it to public infamy; so that its malicious secrets are known, and its whispers heard throughout the world. How far is this malignant disposition, so full of rancour against mankind, and so incapable of peace with itself, that unless it be pampered with the misfortunes of others, it must, like a stomach without food, prey upon itself; how far is such a disposition from the affectionate, the generous, the forgiving temper of Christianity? As far as darkness from light, and hell from heaven.—Rev. P. Shelton.

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By order of the Committee of Management. (Signed) H. J. GRASSETT, Secretary & Treasurer. Toronto, June 1, 1840. 49-5w.

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