

The Family Circle.

THE BELL OF JUSTICE.

There was a king long years ago;
His name historian doth not know.
He lived beneath Italian skies,
A noble monarch, just and wise.
That he might serve his people well,
In a high tower he hung a bell.
He who was wronged had but to ring
The bell of justice, for the king
Was bound to make the humblest prayer
The subject of his royal care.
At first men rung it every day;
Dotted at last the rope away.
And, growing shouter by degrees,
Swayed lightly to each passing breeze.
For many a month it idle hung,
No longer needed. No one rung
For justice. Men had learned to fear,
And dreaded now the bell to hear.
At length a wandering grapevine clung
Tight to the rope that idle hung,
And firmly held it, sweetly grasped,
As if one hand another clasped.
A starving horse, turned out to die,
One summer day was passing by,
And browsing where the grapevine hung,
The bell of justice loudly rung.
Straightway a royal herald came,
And saw the horse half-starved and lame.
He told the king who rang the bell;
The monarch answered: "It is well."
"The brute for justice doth appeal,
For starving brutes I pity feel."
"Go seek his owner out for me,
And tell him this is our decree:
"Long as he lives his horse must fare
On oats and grass of his. Beware
"If he again for justice call
My wrath shall on his owner fall."
Would God to-day there was a bell
That brutes could ring and thereby tell
The story of their cruel wrongs,
And win the justice that belongs
To every creature, great and small,
For God, their Maker, loveth all.

—Robert L. Bangs

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MARJORIE'S CANADIAN WINTER.

BY AGNES MAULE MACHAR.

CHAPTER XVII.—CONTINUED.

But Dr. Ramsay saw no improvement yet, and one afternoon, when Marjorie returned from school, Marion met her with the sad intelligence that her father had come home from a consultation with scarcely any hope of Ada's recovering from the utter prostration of her present condition. While there was life there was hope, of course, but no one could tell at present how much power of rallying she possessed, and the end might come at any moment.

Marjorie was almost stunned. She had never realized before the idea of death in connection Ada, notwithstanding her anxiety. In the rush of feeling that came over her, the predominant thought was that she must see Ada once more, even if she might not speak to her. If she only could tell her how sorry she was for what now seemed to her her unkind speech about illness, which also seemed to her to have been an ill-omened harbinger of evil.

She did not wait to take counsel of any one, but hurried off to Mrs. West's house; and instead of the usual query, asked if she could see Mrs. West, or any one. The servant said she did not know. Mrs. West did not see any one, but she would see if Mr. Gerald was in, and she showed Miss Fleming into the library. The room seemed empty, but Marjorie stepped quietly in over the soft carpet, for the house seemed so hushed that she instinctively tried to move silently, not to break the prevailing stillness. Suddenly she perceived that Mr. West was standing with his back to her, leaning on the back of an easy-chair, his head bowed in his hands, while a tempest of grief shook his frame. Marjorie was startled and almost frightened. She had never before seen a man so overpowered with emotion, and it was difficult to realize that Mr. West, whom she had always associated with riches and

prosperity, should be in such a depth of distress, though the cause was surely quite sufficient. Ada was the apple of her father's eye, the centre of all his hopes and affections, and her removal from his life would make his prosperity itself seem valueless. Marjorie could not bear to remain there, even as an unseen witness to his grief, and she retired as noiselessly as possible to the drawing-room, where the sumptuous luxury of the surroundings, and the glowing bloom of the conservatory seemed in such mocking contrast to the heavy cloud of sorrow that darkened the luxurious home.

In a few minutes Gerald came in, looking pale and haggard. Marjorie eagerly told him her wish. He looked very grave as he said that probably she might see Ada for a minute or two, but that Ada would not see or notice her, as she was apparently unconscious. He would ask the nurse, as his mother was lying down, quite worn out with grief and watching.

He soon returned and asked Marjorie to follow him upstairs to Ada's room. How vividly the recollection flashed upon her of the day when Ada, bright and joyous, had led her into it first. The canary in his gilded cage was banished now to the conservatory and the room was darkened, so that at first Marjorie could hardly see the pale little face on the pillow. But how changed it was since she had last seen it. Wan, colorless, all the bright sunny locks banished—for they had been cut off in the beginning of her illness—Marjorie could scarcely realize that it could be Ada. She lay with closed eyes, and one might easily have doubted whether she still lived. Marjorie stood at a little distance, fearful lest she might disturb the patient, by whom the nurse was keeping close watch. The tears soon dimmed her sight, and it was only by a strong effort that she could restrain her sobs. But it was of no use to stay here. Ada seemed further away from her than before. So she turned sadly away, almost wishing that she had not come. She could not bear to think of remembering Ada like this, if—but she would not think of such a possibility just now, or she would break down and distress Gerald. He followed her silently down the stairs, and as she bade him good-by, not venturing on any expression of sympathy, he half-murmured the words: "Pray for her, Marjorie!" and turned away, choking down a sob; for he, too, was fonder of his sister than of any other member of the family.

Marjorie hurried on, too much excited to walk slowly or think calmly. She was possessed by one over-powering thought. If Ada died was she ready to pass to another life? She remembered vividly the words Nettie Lane had used about her father, and though applied to him they seemed absurd, they now appeared to her filled with a terrible meaning about Ada. She could not think that Ada was a Christian, and if she should die in this condition! Why had she not tried harder to lead her to think of the things that now were the only things that could matter to her? She felt as if she had been false to her duty and cruel to her friend, and that she would give any thing in her power for an opportunity of retrieving her neglect. Feeling as if she could not bear the burden of such thoughts alone, she was seized with the impulse to go to Miss Matilda Mostyn with her trouble. She felt that she would sympathize with her trouble, and that she might throw some light on the problem that was perplexing her. Fortunately, she found Miss Matilda alone, with the sweet and peaceful expression that always made her face so attractive, even to those who did not know its secret.

Miss Matilda understood Marjorie's trouble at once, without much need for explanation. She had, indeed, been thinking a great deal about Ada; had been taking her anxiety about the child where she took all her burdens, and laid them down. And she had a soothing balm ready; even her soft and gentle tones seemed to carry it in advance to the sorrowful heart.

"Yes," she said, "its an anxious thought,

I know; many a time I've had it myself! But remember, Marjorie, God loves Ada infinitely more than you can. Can't you leave her in his wise and loving care?"

"Yes; but O, Miss Matilda! if she were to die unprepared! And she has never had any one to make her think of such thing."

"My dear," said Miss Matilda, "people talk a great deal too much about being 'prepared' for death. If they would think a little more about being prepared for life! It's all a part of the one thing, for time can't make such a difference in God's sight. It is a terrible thing, if one realizes it, for any one to be living in any corner of God's universe and not be friends—be reconciled with the God of infinite love and wisdom; not be the true child of the loving Father. But then he has such infinite patience, as well as infinite love and wisdom. And he has many a way that we know not, to bring his 'banished' home; banished, of course, by their own wayward will. So, my dear, just trust poor little Ada in her Father's hands, and don't think that you could do more for her than he can."

Marjorie went home much comforted, though she cried half the night. And Alan looked as if he had not slept much either; in fact, he had been very different from the usual Alan ever since his father had been called in for consultation in Ada's case. No one took any notice of his depression, knowing that he would shrink from and resent it. Even Millie had sympathy and tact enough to refrain from seeming to observe that he was not in his usual spirits; and the progress of affairs in the northwest, and the mustering of the Volunteers always furnished a timely relief from the topic which was too painful in its interest to permit of discussion.

But, as the April days passed slowly by, and the piles of snow were insensibly melting away from the streets, Ada's condition seemed to improve a little; and Dr. Ramsay, who visited her daily, began to dare to hope that she had, as he said, 'turned the corner.' But he warned them all, when they expressed their delight, that it would require the greatest care and most judicious nursing to bring her back to health and strength, and that any relapse would probably prove fatal. As the orders were that she was to be kept perfectly quiet, Marjorie had no expectation of seeing her for a long time. But one day Gerald came over to say that Ada had taken a fancy to see Marjorie, and that she would fret if it were not gratified; only, if Marjorie came, she must not let Ada waste any of her strength in talking. Marjorie willing promised to try to keep Ada from getting excited by the interview, and accompanied Gerald at once, her heart beating quickly at the thought of seeing her friend again after this long season of suspense, which had made her feel how strongly she had become attached to her kind-hearted, though thoughtless little friend.

Ada looked a little more like herself than she had done when Marjorie had last seen her, but the absence of the cloud of bright hair and the soft wild-rose color made a very great difference. She tried to smile when she saw Marjorie, who only took her hand quietly, as if she had seen her the day before, having been strictly charged by her uncle to show no feeling in the interview. Ada was not allowed to talk yet, nor indeed was she disposed to do so; but she did summon strength enough to say to Marjorie, with a rueful attempt at a smile:

"Haven't they made me a fright? All my poor hair gone!"

Marjorie only smiled, and said that it wouldn't be long in growing again; but in her heart she felt almost as much regret as Ada. It did seem like a pretty picture spoiled; and yet she wondered how she could think of such things when Ada had been restored, as it seemed, from the very grave.

Mrs. West sat beside Ada this time, though the nurse was still on duty; and Marjorie was shocked by the great change in her, too. She looked ten years older;

indeed, it was hard to believe that this worn and faded-looking woman could be the much-admired Mrs. West. For she had a heart, after all, and, next to her eldest son, who had been adding recently to her load of anxiety, its idol was her pretty daughter; and when trouble and threatened bereavement came, she found no help or comfort in the things that ordinarily satisfied her selfish heart. After all, as Marjorie's father had once said to her, people did not always have to lose their riches to find out that they are not "enduring habitations."

Ada begged Marjorie to come again soon, and Mrs. West endorsed the request; for weakness and inactivity made Ada very fretful, and her mother was glad to catch at anything that seemed likely to entertain her a little. So she came frequently to sit with her in the afternoons, not, however, quite deserting Louis, who was getting on nicely, and now had Millie and Jack for his more frequent visitors; though Jack had to carry on most of his conversation with him in dumb show. Marjorie had to give up all thoughts of drawing the head she had been ambitious to do for her father; but she felt that Ada needed her, and that her father would be much better pleased with her doing the kindness to a friend than he would be with the most successful drawing. And, indeed, it made no small difference in the rapidity of Ada's improvement that Marjorie came to sit by her almost daily for two or three hours; talking to her when she was disposed to listen, and sometimes reading to her bits of Mr. Fleming's letters, containing lively descriptions of the West India Islands, which he was visiting; and occasionally a part of one of his printed articles about the Southern life, which had now begun to appear, much to Marjorie's delight, for it seemed to her a visible token of his re-established health.

But one afternoon Gerald insisted that Marjorie should go down with him to see the "ice shove"; that is, the curious massing and piling up of the cakes of ice along the shore when the river bursts its icy barriers. It occasionally causes a flood, but at this time it was not so violent, though the jagged masses, with which the shore was heaped, bore witness to the strength of the current that drove them before it and landed them in picturesque confusion along the river bank.

"You must go to see the Lachine Rapids some day," Gerald said, "and then you won't wonder at the effects of such an irresistible force."

Marjorie described it all to Ada, on her return, but Ada listened without much interest. She had never been taught to enjoy nature much in any form, and did not see anything particularly interesting about an "ice shove."

Presently she asked Marjorie how the little French boy was getting on. She seemed to have only now recollected him.

Marjorie told her, adding that Millie and Jack went to see him often, now that she could not go so frequently.

"O, dear!" said Ada; "how tiresomely good you all are! Even Jack and Millie, too!"

Marjorie said nothing, only smiled a little. But Ada had got into an unusually thoughtful mood. The two girls were quite alone, and the air of a very balmy spring day came gently through the ventilator, while the spring sunshine, softened by the rose-tinted curtains, flooded the pretty room.

"Marjorie," began Ada, very seriously, "I suppose I came very near dying?"

"I suppose so," Marjorie replied. It was the first time that Ada had seemed conscious of having been in such danger.

"Well, if I had died, what do you suppose would have become of me?"

This question completely puzzled Marjorie. She did not know what to answer, even to herself.

"You know ministers always say that people can't go to heaven unless they are Christians, and I know very well I'm not a Christian, though I believe you are! So I couldn't have gone to Heaven, could I?"

(To be continued.)