

forgot that early habit. Moreover, all her attention was required to keep in order the little company that began to fill her own pew. She sat in the middle thereof; and three little heads on either side of her, two hatted and four unhatted, rose step-like to the ends. Encompassed by so much humanity, a woman has but slender opportunity of profiting by theology; and, for the most part, her husband's sermons boomed over Mrs. Ellis's head, leaving no impression whatever behind. Once she would have deemed the mere thought of such a thing sacrilege.

It must be said that though the Rev. Reuben Ellis was a good preacher, he was a poor father. He lived in the same house as his wife and children, but he seldom made any attempt to live in the same world. The man's long struggle with disillusion had soured him; and his family inevitably suffered most from the souring. He took little interest in his children, leaving them almost entirely to their mother. The more his sermons failed to impress Oldborough, the more he seemed to shut himself up in his study. Except in his absence, none of his children had ever been in that delphic room; nor, to say truth, had they greatly cared to enter it. Before the children came, his wife had loved to sit there; but now, save for a weekly dusting, she seldom or never found her way thither. The tragedy was that he never seemed to notice it. And she had so much to do that she scarcely found time to notice it.

Every Saturday morning the minister put thirty shillings into his wife's hands. What was done with it he inquired not. What sermons he might have written if he had looked into the way in which those thirty pieces of silver did their work, the pathetic contrivances, the marvellous juggling with the multiplication table, the innumerable subtractions. For now that the family numbered eight, the revenue was the same as when it consisted of two. If he could but have seen how frock descended from child to child till no mortal ingenuity could hold it together any longer; if he had had any vision for the many and divers-colored patches on Edgar's trousers, which had been the trousers of Philip, who had received them from Stanley—reminding one of the house that Jack built or the genealogy in Luke—if he had once gone shopping for the household! Ah, if, but he never saw or did these things. If he had, he would have found a visit to Mr. Adams, the grocer, or Mr. Lucas the butcher, more luminous and helpful than the finest treatise on homiletics. How a shilling can do the work of fifteen pence is not revealed in any commentator.

It was a Saturday evening. Mrs. Ellis had given the smaller children their weekly bath, and six volcanoes were for a time extinct. The minister had come down from his study to supper. His thoughts were with his Sunday morning sermon, and he ate his supper in silence. His wife sat by the fireside, with a pile of stockings which were on an adjacent chair, which were waiting to be darned. To the male mind darning is a negligible quantity. But twelve young feet, oh, my brothers, what they can accomplish no one but a mother knows. She seems to wage perpetual warfare with holes. Holes at the knees, holes at the heels, holes at the toes, holes that admit the passage of the hands, rudimentary half-ashamed holes, holes naked and unabashed, a comic-tragedy of holes. If Penelope had been a darning for a healthy family, she would have had no need to pull her work to pieces. Mrs. Ellis never grumbled at these ventilated stockings; but her back ached every week over them. And on this particular night a fear, which had long haunted her, came upon her with a sudden, chilling power.

'Reuben, dear,' she said, 'I wish you would light another gas. I really cannot see what I am doing.'

When Reuben Ellis first met Grace Kelsey, that which attracted him most in that quiet maiden was the exceeding brilliance of her eyes. It was from the pulpit that he first beheld them; and all through the singing of the hymns and up at times through

the wordy sermon 'here rose to his mind the burden of Camoens' song, 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.' They haunted him by day and night. And long after the passion of youthful love had died away he still felt a kind of pride in those beautiful eyes. He liked to hear people speak of them. They seemed to him the last remnant of the poetry of other days. Alas! there is no poetry in spectacles; behind spectacles, the sweetest eyes were ever seen are merely optical organs. And when Grace Ellis took to spectacles, all the glamor was gone, and he almost seemed to look upon it as a personal injury. The romance of life was dead; and henceforth there was nothing to look forward to but a dreary vista of deacons, and vestries, and lifeless sermons, and the perpetual 'res angusta domi.'

'I will light the gas if you wish it,' said Reuben, 'but our gas bill was heavier than ever last quarter.'

'Never mind, then, dear,' replied Grace. 'Only these stockings are black, and I can't see them at all well. I'm afraid my sight is failing, Reuben. Everything looks so different.'

The minister lit the gas, and sat down on the other side of the fire. Then he looked at his wife, the wife he had sworn to love and cherish. For the first time he noticed how old she looked. She was only thirty-three, but her hair was getting very grey, he saw, and her face was worn and pinched. Slowly it dawned upon him that this wife of his was years older than she ought to be. Then his gaze fell with a sort of fascination upon her wedding ring; and he thought of her as his bride, and of the untranslatable hopes of the wedding morning. He remembered how well that ring fitted her years ago. To-night he noticed how it kept slipping up and down her finger, as she went on with her darning. He had never taken any interest in darning before; he had only had a vague sort of consciousness that his own socks were darned neatly and comfortably enough. But now even his untutored eyes could see that this darning wouldn't do. With a look of straining interest he watched her, the big, ungainly stitches, the way in which the needle would go to the wrong place. At last he spoke.

'Grace, dear,' he said, and there was a tone in his voice which made his wife look up from her work in astonishment—'Grace, dear, I'm afraid you are doing too much. Let the stocking be for to-night. You are tired, and had better go to bed.'

'But they must be done, Reuben,' she replied; 'the children have no others to put on to-morrow. I began them last night, but I couldn't see to go on with them. I must finish them to-night.'

'No, dear,' said her husband, 'whatever the children have to wear, you must not finish them now. You promised to obey me once, you know,' he added, with a somewhat wintry smile. 'Put them away now, dear; we will see about them on Monday.'

And you really think there is no hope, Sir Philip, that nothing more can be done?'

'I'm afraid not, said the specialist. 'I would give you hope, Mr. Ellis, if I could, for your sake, and still more, if I may say so, for the sake of your wife, who seems a lady of wonderful patience and sweetness. But the mischief has gone too far. If you had brought her to me a year ago, I might have been able to do something; but these last twelve months have, I fear, made that impossible.'

'And how long do you think the sight may last?' anxiously inquired the minister.

'It is difficult to say,' was the reply, 'Mrs. Ellis is over-worked, and run down. If she has complete rest and no worries from children and others, and especially if the eyes be kept perfectly quiet, it is possible that the sight may be kept, though ever more and more imperfectly, for three or four months. It grieves me to say it, but I cannot promise more than that. Let her have plenty of nourishing food, and keep her as cheerful as you can. It is a dreadful blow for her, poor lady, but, if I have read her aright she will bear it well.'

'God have mercy on me, doctor,' said the

remorseful minister; 'I need it more even than she does.'

The respite was prolonged a little beyond the limit promised by Sir Philip Walters. One bright sunny afternoon in July, as the minister was sitting reading to his wife in their little garden, she suddenly stopped him.

'It is quite hot this afternoon, Reuben. I suppose it is a very bright day?'

'Yes, dear,' he answered; 'it is a perfect summer's day.'

'I thought it was. Well, now, I am sure it is almost my last chance. I should like you to bring the children to me, that I may look upon all your dear faces once more. If I take off this shade I think in the bright light I could manage to see you.'

The minister went on his sad errand. The children were brought wondering, and some of them half afraid, making somewhat pitiful attempts, in obedience to their father's wish, to look bright and cheerful. The mother took their hands in hers, and looked long and earnestly into the face of each. When they were gone, she said, 'Now, dear, let me see you.'

By a supreme effort the minister was able to smile into his wife's face, as she looked upon him for the last time. Then their lips met in a long kiss of speechless tenderness.

There are great changes in Reuben Ellis, manifest in his sermons, his visiting, but especially in his home. The light has gone out for ever from his wife's eyes, but they were never so beautiful to him as now. In his desk there is a half-darned stocking, which has taught him more than all his library. He certainly can say: 'One thing I know; whereas I was blind, now I see.'

### A Cripple's Gift to the Bible Society.

Among the contributions to the Bible Society's Centenary Fund was five shillings from a very poor crippled man in Yorkshire, who has been in bed for twenty years, unable to move or feed himself, and is blind in one eye. His great solace is his Bible. He used to turn the leaves with his tongue, but finding this spoiled the Book, he now holds a bone knitting-needle in his teeth, with which he manages to turn the pages. His great desire has been to aid in Bible work.—'Christian Globe.'

### Canadians Abroad.

Canadians residing abroad will one and all heartily appreciate the 'Canadian Pictorial,' with its monthly budget of 'pictures from home.' The first edition will be exhausted long before most of them realize that there is such a publication—and they will be sorry to miss the first issue. Friends at home could not find a more acceptable gift to send them—only a dollar bill for twelve months of pleasure. For the present this rate covers postage to all parts of the world. Orders of this sort will need to be sent in promptly, for very soon it will be impossible to get the October issue.

On request, a neat gift card will be sent, announcing to the far-away friend the name of the donor.

### A Special Christmas Club.

To friends throughout Canada (excepting Montreal and suburbs) also throughout Great Britain and Ireland, the United States and the many other countries mentioned on page 14 as not requiring extra postage, the 'Canadian Pictorial' may be sent for only fifty cents, provided three or more such subscriptions are remitted at one time. So often in the Christmas preparation for those at home, gifts for the distant friends are not mailed till too late. Now is the time to arrange for what is really a series of gifts, in one of the most delightful forms, a form that makes it possible to share the pleasure with others. Send in your Christmas subscriptions now. They will have the most careful attention.