



The Family Circle.

"Home, Sweet Home."

My Sister Margerie.

At the last Margerie whispered to me—  
"Do you blame me now? Look at the happiness on  
Blanche's face."  
Then she laid her hand on Sir Jasper's arm and went out to  
the carriage.  
A few hasty good-byes a trample of hoofs, and the carriages  
had swept down the street. I went back into the house  
alone.  
How very dreary and doleful it looked without the two  
faces I knew and loved so well! Leaning sadly in the win-  
dow, looking out with eyes dim with weeping, Philip Hilliard,  
hastening by to do the work of the feeble old Rector, smiled  
at my sorrowful face, and the quick, fond glance from his  
eyes made my heart throb with the old pain—and yet that  
fond, bright smile had made me happy too.

Sir Jasper Delaware kept his bride on the continent till  
nearly Christmas time. Margerie wrote bright glowing letters  
full of descriptions of strange scenes and places; they had  
been at Paris, and Margerie was bringing home Paris finery  
enough to last her a lifetime. Sir Jasper seemed indeed the  
most liberal and considerate of husbands, indulging every  
wish of his young wife's with a lavish generosity.  
And Blanche wrote sweet, happy letters too. Her honey-  
moon was over, and she was in all the glory of furnishing  
her own little house; and the burden of her letter was  
"Charlie, Charlie!" I laid the letter aside and fell to musing.  
Uncle Robert was a dull companion. He was glad at  
Margerie's marrying so well, but in his heart I knew he had  
not forgotten Blanche; and he grew more and more deter-  
mined to keep Philip and me apart.

I never fully knew how much it was to me to be able to  
look on Philip's face once a week in church, to see him stand-  
ing in his pulpit, and to listen to his voice, setting forth those  
truths that ruled and governed his own life. His earnest  
tones thrilled my heart, and for two hours in the week I was  
happy, until uncle Robert, seeing, I think, one day, my eyes  
fill suddenly with tears, announced his intention of walking  
next Sunday two weary miles into the country to attend a  
strange church. I knew the reason, and dare not oppose  
him; but I felt so lonely not to have even the consolation of  
seeing the grave earnest face I had grown to love so fondly.

I was glad when Margerie wrote to say that they were coming  
home. And a grand home coming it was, in good old style—  
the horses taken out of the carriage and drawn up the avenue  
by Sir Jasper's tenantry, and Margerie, the fair lady Dele-  
ware, sitting by her tall, handsome husband, bowing and  
smiling and looking very pleased and very shy at the bursts  
of enthusiastic cheering for the bride and bridegroom.

Uncle Robert and I were on the steps of Delaware  
Castle. Sir Jasper lifted his wife from the carriage—lifted  
her, according to the old custom, over the threshold of the  
door, and whispered, "Welcome home, my darling!" And then  
Margerie was laughing and crying in my arms, while the  
tenants shouted, and uncle Robert kept bowing as if it were  
all for him.

"Well, what news?" asked Sir Jasper of uncle Robert as we  
sat at dessert that evening in the grand dining-room at Dele-  
ware Castle. "Has anything happened while I have been  
away?"

"The Rector died yesterday—that is all. He has been  
ailing for some time."

"I know; and Hilliard has been doing his work."  
Sir Jasper and uncle Robert then fell to talking politics, so  
Margerie and I left the room. Sir Jasper opened the door  
and as we passed smiled a fond proud smile at the face of  
his wife.

"How he loves you, Margerie!" I whispered, as we went  
into the drawing-room.

She turned to me, a light in her beautiful eyes.  
"Jean, I wish he loved me less, or that I loved him more.  
His whole thought is to make me happy; he is everything  
that is good and noble. What have I done to deserve such a  
husband?"

Her voice was trembling, and then she conquered her agi-  
tation, and in her own gay merry way told me of all the  
strange and wonderful places they had seen, and it all wound  
up with—

"Oh, Jean, you can have no idea how kind Jasper is, or  
how happy I am."

As uncle Robert walked home with me that night through  
the beautiful park of Delaware Castle, he was more talkative  
than usual.

"Margerie is happy," he said. "And she deserves to be—  
she made a sensible match."

"That Blanche might make a foolish one," was on the tip of  
my tongue to say, but I didn't and remarked instead—"Mar-  
gerie is happy, certainly, but I don't like people to marry for  
money."

"It is better than to marry without it," was uncle Robert's  
reply. "And as for all that humbug of persons being in love,  
why, the sooner it is knocked out of their head the better.  
We live in a matter-of-fact world, and must act accord-  
ingly."

"Did you ever care for anyone, uncle Robert?" I asked,  
looking up into his face in the dark. It was a full minute be-  
fore he answered, and then his voice sounded low and  
strange—

"My past is my own—with that you have nothing to do,  
child."

Had this strange, hard man met with some disappointment  
in his youth, which had soured and embittered him? Who  
could tell? Somehow I rather pitied than blamed uncle  
Robert after that night.

"Here is a letter, uncle Robert, from Margerie, asking us  
up to dinner to-night to meet the new Rector. I wonder who  
he is."

"You'll know soon enough," replied uncle Robert gruffly.  
"I can't go to-night; but if you want to go, I suppose Sir Jasper  
can send you home, if you must see the new Rector."

"I don't care about the new Rector, but I do care about an  
evening with Margerie," I confessed, thinking anything pre-  
ferable to the usual gloomy *tele-a-tele* with uncle Robert.

Evening found me debating in what dress to do honour to  
the new Rector, looking very wistfully at my own face in the  
glass—for it was not such a happy face as it used to be; and  
then, being in a gloomy frame of mind, I arrayed myself in  
black silk, and went to Delaware Castle, escorted to the door  
by uncle Robert.

Margerie was in the drawing-room with Sir Jasper. She  
looked more bright and radiant than us, and his eyes  
seemed dancing with amusement. They were a happy couple,  
certainly. Margerie was beautifully dressed; she came up to  
me smiling playfully.

"Jean, you must have some scarlet flowers in your hair;  
the new Rector will be horrified. Come to the conserva-  
tory."

I let her do as she liked, and, laughing gaily, she fastened  
the flowers in my hair and dress. When we came into the  
drawing-room again, the new Rector was standing on the rug  
talking to Sir Jasper. He turned; my cheeks crimsoned.  
Philip Hilliard stood before me, smiling and holding out  
his hand. Margerie clasped her hands.

"Oh, Jean, haven't I surprised you? But it was all Jasper's  
plan; he never told me till it was all settled"—clasping both  
hands on her husband's arm and smiling up into his face.

"I am the new Rector," said Philip, holding both my hands  
in his.

"My eyes, are you glad?"  
My eyes as they met his must have answered the question,  
for he turned suddenly to my brother-in-law, and grasped his  
hand.

"Heaven bless you, Sir Jasper; you have made us very  
happy."

"I hope you may be half as happy as I am," laughed Sir  
Jasper. "My cup is about full."

It seemed to have come so suddenly, this great joy that  
filled my heart; I could hardly realize that I was sitting  
that evening with Philip, talking to him, and hearing his  
voice.

"You will see her home, Rector," said Sir Jasper, as I stood  
cloaked and ready in the hall; and then he took my hand.

"If Philip hadn't been the noble fellow he is, Jean, I  
wouldn't have made him Rector, not even for you."

What matters what Philip Hilliard said that night, as we  
walked home down the avenue, under the elm-trees? What  
matters indeed? Only to us two every word was fraught with  
its own meaning, when we who had been shut out from each  
other's society for so many months met at last.

Uncle Robert looked up as I entered the room, flushed and  
trembling.

"I know it already," he said. "Sir Jasper told me yes-  
terday."

"You will give your consent now, uncle Robert?" I pleaded.

"Yes, and my blessing with it. I am sorry I kept you  
from him so long, Jean; he is a good man. Good night,  
child, good night."

That was a confession from uncle Robert. I went up to  
him and kissed him because he had spoken well of Philip.

It was a soft gray afternoon, with the clouds hanging low in  
the sky. I was spending the day at Delaware Castle, keeping  
Margerie company. Sir Jasper had ridden off to the meet-  
ing early that morning, and was not expected home till late.

It was a week before my wedding, and I was to be married from  
Delaware Castle. Sir Jasper, thinking such an arrangement  
would please his wife, had wished it to be so, and Margerie  
was more than pleased at his thoughtful kindness.

We had plenty to talk about that long winter afternoon,  
and the time passed quickly enough. When the evening  
gloom came on we sat down in the arm-chairs at either side  
of the fire and resumed our many talks and plans as to the  
future. Margerie, leaning back in her chair, and with some  
difficulty I extracted myself from him; he got out, but I was  
swept by the current—I had no idea it was so strong since  
the rains—about half a mile lower down. I managed to get  
ashore on the other side, and after resting a bit, I went to a  
cottage and got my things dried, and some whiskey-and-water  
to keep the cold out, and walked home, a good round of eight  
miles. I am afraid I frightened you all dreadfully.

"Oh, Jasper, if it has been—!" began Margerie, and  
then stopped with a little gasp, looking up in his face; and  
then she leaned her head on his shoulder with a sigh of con-  
tent! saying, "Thank heaven, Jasper, you are safe!"

The door was thrown open, and old Martin, his face beam-  
ing, appeared.

"Dinner is ready, Sir Jasper; and cook bade me say, sir,  
the fish is spoilt, but the soup is none the worse for the de-  
lay."

Sir Jasper laughed—Martin was a privileged old servant  
and could say almost what he liked.

"Come along," said Sir Jasper gleefully; I hope you are  
all as hungry as I am."

The rest of the evening passed merrily and cheerfully, and  
when Philip came to see me home we were able to laugh over  
our fears; but Margerie was a little silent gravely, happy, her  
eyes ever wandering to her husband's face.

As I went down the wide steps with Philip, I felt as if all  
our happiness was complete, for I had looked back and seen  
Margerie, with both hands clasped on Sir Jasper's arm, smil-  
ing a good-night to us, and then looking up lovingly into the  
brave tender face at her side.

That night, as I walked home under the elm with Philip,  
and down the quiet street, I was happy, for I knew that  
Margerie loved her husband at last.

A. I. W.

calmly and distinctly—but when there was nothing more to  
do but sit patient y and wait, she broke down, weeping for  
the husband who had loved her so dearly. We were in the  
drawing-room; the lamp had been lit, and I sat beside  
Margerie, weeping for her sorrow. She lay on the sofa, her  
face hidden, her shoulders heaving with convulsive sobs, her  
hands clenched. Every now and then she would exclaim,  
"go and see if they have heard anything."

And when I came back my silence told her there was no  
news. Then poor Margerie rose and paced the room. A storm  
had risen and the winter wind was howling and walling round  
the house.

"That wind—oh, if it would but stop, Jean! I cannot  
hear if there is anyone coming." And then she added, her  
poor face deadly white, an awful horror in her eyes—"Jean,  
I shall go mad if I hear the tramp of feet bringing him."

"Hush, Margerie," I cried; "oh, don't talk like that!"

"Jasper!" she cried, softly; and then with a wall of despair  
in her voice—"I wasn't worthy of him, and heaven has taken  
him away—my husband!"

The door opened gently; she turned with a cry. It was  
only Martin bringing in a tray with some tea and wine.

"You have taken no dinner, my lady," he said, his voice  
trembling. Poor old man, he had carried Sir Jasper in his  
arms when a boy, and he sorrowed for his master with a  
grief that was real and unfeigned. "Do, my lady," he urged,  
looking pityingly at his mistress's sorrow-stricken face.

I got up and poured out a glass of wine.

"Take it, Margerie," I said. "You must, it will do you  
good."

"No, no, it would choke me. Martin, have the men come  
back!"

"No, my lady."

And once more Margerie resumed her weary pacing to and  
fro. Another hour dragged slowly by. It was past eight now.

Was it only two hours ago that Martin had come in and told  
us? It seemed many more. The fire was dying low; Margerie  
rang the bell and had it replenished.

"Heap it up," she said; "make it blaze. He will be so  
very cold."

And she shivered, and, throwing herself on a couch began  
to talk of her husband, going back to the time when they  
were married, telling of all his love and kindness, of his brave  
good heart, which had prompted each kind and noble action,  
till her voice choked and her eyes filled and overflowed with  
bitter tears; and then bursting into bitter weeping with a  
wild cry of—"My husband, and he will never know how I  
loved him!" she once more buried her face in her hands,  
when a voice at the door made us both spring to our feet.

"Margerie, my wife, what is all this?"

"Jasper, Jasper!" and Margerie was in her husband's arms,  
clinging to him, and sobbing on his breast.

"My darling," he said, tenderly, pressing her tightly to his  
heart, "what happened? Have I frightened you?"

He lifted the weeping face hidden on his breast, but Mar-  
gerie could not speak; she only wound her arms tighter  
around his neck. Sir Jasper turned to me for an explana-  
tion.

"What is it, Jean? I met all the servants in the hall, the  
women crying and the men weeping as bad as I, and here is my  
foolish little wife making herself ill because I wasn't home for  
dinner. Is that it, darling?" stooping and whispering to  
Margerie.

I soon told him of our fears, and all Margerie had gone  
through. His face grew grave and then very loving and  
tender. He placed her on a couch, and then brought her  
a glass of wine. She was very pale, and he thought she was  
going to faint.

"Drink this, Margerie. No? Well I won't tell you my  
side of the story till you do."

She took it then, smiling up into his face.

"Oh, Jasper!"—drawing a long, sobbing breath—"I thought  
I was never to see you again!"

"There was no such good luck in store for you," he  
laughed, trying to make light of it, for Margerie was pale and  
trembling from the shock of the last few hours. "I'll tell  
you how it was," he added, sitting down by his wife and  
holding her hand in his. "I was trying to ford the river in  
the dusk, and that brute Sultan rolled over, and with some  
difficulty I extracted myself from him; he got out, but I was  
swept by the current—I had no idea it was so strong since  
the rains—about half a mile lower down. I managed to get  
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Mike—"It's the Irish that does all the invent-  
ing in these days, sure." Jonathan—"Irish be  
damned; the Irish don't invent anything to speak  
of; it's the Americans that invent everything."

Mike—"Thin perhaps yez can tell me why the  
Irishman's name, Pat., is always next to the date,  
on all the new inventions. Divil of an American  
name can ye find on wan, at all, at all!"—[Louis-  
ville Courier Journal.