



The Family Circle.

MY REFUGE.

PSALMS CIV., 17-18.

To the rock flies the coney,
The stork to her nest,
When tempests are gathering
And black is the west;
So swift, by life's trials
O'erwhelmed and oppressed,
I fly to my refuge,
Jehovah my rest!

The nest, whither speedeth
The storm-beaten bird,
Aloft, on the fir-top
By tempests is stirred:
But the nest of my refuge
No storm-wind can smite;
'Tis the breast of Jehovah;
I'm safe from affright.

The rock where the coney
Securely may hide
Is set in the mountain's
Cold, pitiless side;
But the rock of my safety,
The home of my quest,
'Tis the heart of my Saviour;
How warm and how blest!

Then blow, thou wild tempest,
I fear not thy might;
Though blackly thou lowerest,
My prospect is bright:
Jehovah, my Saviour,
I fly to thy breast,
Dear rock of my refuge!
Dear sheltering nest!

—Alice Boise Wood in Gospel Age.

BESSIE'S OPPORTUNITY.

BY MRS. M. F. BUTTS.

Bessie Hart sat by the attic window hemming a bit of gray tissue. It was a veil, to be worn the very next day on a journey. The little gable room was Bessie's own. It was a narrow place, but wide enough for the fledging of hopes and dreams, many of which had flown out of the window and far away; even over seas. Just now it was in a sort of pleasant disorder. On the little bed lay a neat traveling dress, jaunty hat, wrap and gloves. Across two chairs rested the tray of a trunk, getting packed by degrees. The void whence the tray had been taken yawned suggestively. A chair back was laden with various articles of dress; and on the little bureau, or rather chest of drawers, were boxes containing handkerchiefs and a small amount of girlish finery. These preparations, be it known, represented very limited means; for Bessie was the daughter of a farmer, living on land of which Westerners say: "The sheep's noses have to be sharpened to get at the grass." Many a graceful, "stylish" girl grows up with these same sheep; bare-footed it may be, sun-burned she is sure to be, shy, gypsyish as a little girl, but suddenly turning into something as pretty, refined and fresh as the pink arbutus in her father's woods. Of this not uncommon type was Bessie. Such girls are apt to have fathers college-bred, and mothers once as delicate and graceful as themselves. These fathers and mothers come after a while to merge all their hopes and ambitions in their children's future. So it was in Bessie's home, and only by many economies was she fitted out for her trip to the mountains; for that was the delightful reason for the trunk-packing, the travelling dress, and the general stirred-up appearance of the attic room. With taste that would have done credit to a French modiste the pretty gown, a *royale* had been fashioned from one little worn belonging to the mother. The hat was home-trimmed, in imitation of a fashionable model just from town, worn by a girl who could afford as many and as handsome hats as she pleased; and so on through the wardrobe, the mother helping, planning, giving up, smoothing difficulties, till the daughter was almost ready for the long-anticipated trip.

It was a good fairy of an aunt who was to be the chaperon and purse-bearer, add-

ing to the outfit a flowery India silk, that set Bessie dancing about the room in triumph when it was received.

"I'm glad my hands are small and pretty," thought Bessie, as she made long runs through the gauzy stuff. "That's a sign of ladyhood." Then she fell to dreaming about the new scenes and experiences just ahead, a smile making dimples about her pretty mouth. The last stitch was taken in the veil, and the girl was folding it rather dreamily, when there came a sound from the room below as of some heavy body falling. Bessie knew that her mother had been putting up scrim curtains in that room a short time before. Fearing, she knew not what, the girl rushed down the attic stairs, to find her mother lying unconscious by an overturned chair. Luckily, a little brother was not far away. He was sent instantly for a doctor; then Bessie set to work to bring back the life that she thought, with an awful fear, might be past recovery. When the doctor arrived, the patient had opened her eyes. In a little while she seemed as well as ever, excepting that she was a little languid.

"You are not to think of giving up your mountain trip, Bessie," said she at the tea-table. "I ought to have let your father put up those curtains. I was faint, and lost my balance; that was all."

"Ought I to go, father?" asked Bessie. "I don't like to decide for you," said Mr. Hart. "In this case I shall leave the matter to your own judgment."

Bessie slipped away in the evening, and visited the doctor.

"Heart trouble," said he. "But your mother is likely to live to a good old age. Don't be frightened."

Aunt Hart decided that Mary Ann Jones should be engaged to stay with Mrs. Hart while Bessie was away.

"Oughtn't you to stay at home, child? Nonsense! The case is no different since your mother's attack. She has had those spells for years,—though not lately,—the last one was when you were away at school; we didn't tell you anything about it."

But the girl was not satisfied. "Stay," said a soft, pleading voice in her heart. She went to her room resolved to listen to it; but there were the trunk, the traveling costume, the lovely silk dress left unfolded till the last moment, the pretty trifles on the bureau. The wish for the fascinating outing came back with full force. Auntie ought to know what was best. Her mother did not need her. Mary Ann Jones would do all the work. Yes, she would go. Only she wished her father would say one thing or another. She thought she could go with a good conscience if he would give his full consent. However, she finished her packing, made the last preparations, and went to bed early, for the train left the station nearest the farm at eight o'clock in the morning.

At breakfast her mother was bright and cheery. There was the usual color in her cheeks, and she would not listen to any suggestion of giving up the trip.

So Bessie started, and was soon absorbed with the delight of travelling through new scenes, on a fresh, dewy, temperate July morning. Never in all her life had she been farther from home than the next town, from whose high school she had graduated. As fresh as the morning were her unworn sensations. She was glad to be young, glad to be pretty, as her mirror told her she was, glad to be going somewhere, and especially glad that that somewhere were the wonderful, dreamed-of, enchanting hills. She meant to tramp, to climb, to ride and drive. Auntie Hart had money, and would not stint the good time she had undertaken. And her father had promised to send a bulletin from home every day, so that she should not feel too anxious about her mother. More than one occupant of their car noticed the fresh face and the girlish figure. Her newness to life was as unmistakable as are April violets. Her childish pleasure in the journey brought smiles to faces worn with ennui; and more than one faded, discontented woman, with great diamonds at her ears, envied the happy youthfulness that clung to Bessie, as fragrance to the rose.

That night the travellers slept in Boston. Bessie went to bed thinking of her mother, and quite naturally dreamed of her. But the dream troubled her, it was so realistic. She saw her mother, in her vision, pale, anxious, worn, and heard her call, "Bessie!"

Bessie" in distinct tones. At the early breakfast the dream was told by the dreamer, and pool-pooled by the aunt.

"Auntie," said Bessie, "I have been thinking, ever since I woke up, of something that grandfather said to me when he was at our house last winter."

"Your grandfather is eccentric and old-fashioned" was the reply.

"He told me," continued Bessie, "that all through my life opportunities would come to me; but that just now was my opportunity to be good to mother."

At eight o'clock our travellers were seated in their car, bound mountain-ward. By many an historic place they steamed, and as the names were called out by the grimy brakeman, Bessie longed to stay a while in each, and prowl about to her heart's content.

"Some day I hope I can go where I please," she said to her companion.

"Then you must give up your romantic notions," was the reply, "be sensible, and take the good things that come in your way. I don't altogether approve of your bringing up."

The last phrase brought her home vividly to Bessie's mind; all its sacrifices, its refined poverty, its lessons of noble idealism. How much had been given up that she might have an easier life than father and mother had. She glanced at the little hand lying in her lap. She remembered other hands made hard and unshapely by toil. Again she grew uneasy about her mother. As she looked from the window at the wide, level meadows through which they were flying, seeing, with the inward eye, the stony home farm, there came suddenly a queer scraping sound; then a jounce, jounce, jounce, and the car stopped. The gentlemen hurried out to see what was the matter. The ladies, with anxious looks, waited for news. The report soon came back that a wheel was broken.

"Bad luck so soon," said Bessie. "O auntie, I wish I hadn't come. I ought to have stayed with mother. I know father wanted me to stay."

"Nonsense!" said Aunt Hart. "If I had known you were such a hand to make mountains of mole-hills, I am not sure I should have offered to take you with me."

There would be a delay of an hour or more, a gentleman said to his wife, coming in from among the train hands. These two sat directly in front of Mrs. Hart and her niece. A sweet, pathetic face had the lady. As she turned to answer a remark of Mrs. Hart's, Bessie saw that her eyes were red, as if from recent tears. The little party soon became better acquainted, and at last left the car together, to stroll about till it should be time to go on.

"My wife feels this delay," said the gentleman to Bessie, the lady being some distance away, talking to Mrs. Hart; "she is going home to her mother's funeral. I am afraid we shall be too late."

The words fell like a warning upon the girl's sensitive heart. Going to her aunt, presently, she said:

"Auntie, I'm going home on the next Boston train. I can walk back to the nearest station. It's only a little way."

"Child, what a trial you are! Bessie, this lady is Mrs. Church. She is acquainted with friends of mine in Providence."

The lady bowed and smiled—such a sad smile.

"Now," said Mrs. Hart, "I'm going to tell Mrs. Church the exact circumstances, and see what she says."

Thereupon the circumstances were told. "Now, do you think this foolish girl ought to go back?" asked Aunt Hart.

The lady's lip quivered. "Not two weeks ago," said she, "I left my mother against my will. She had been ill, but was pronounced out of danger. I am now on my way to her funeral."

"Oh, Mrs. Church! O Auntie! Wait. I am going into the car to get my things. I shall start directly back to the station. I can get home before night; and I will take a hack to the Providence Depot. I can manage alone."

She ran into the car, came out in half a minute with shawl and hand-bag, flushed and restless and eager.

"Let her go," said Mrs. Church, laying her hand on Mrs. Hart's arm. "Don't say a word to discourage her. Her daughterly instincts are truer than your philosophy."

Mrs. Hart yielded, but would not let Bessie go alone to the station.

"I can take the next train," she said. "I will go with you and wait."

Mrs. Church put her card into Bessie's hand, at parting.

"I should be glad to have you visit me," she said, with emphasis, "very glad. I have no daughter. Your mother is fortunate."

Bessie fled homeward as fast as steam would carry her. She arrived at the little home station at five o'clock. A neighbor's boy had just driven up to the platform.

"Golly! ef there ain't Bess Hart back again! Did yo hear the news?" exclaimed the youngster.

"What news?" asked Bessie, losing her color suddenly.

"That yer father 'd got throwed along o' that fiery colt o' hisn. Don't look so white. Wasn't no bones broke, the doctor says. But he's dreadfully jounced up; might 'a' ben somethin' put out o' jint, furzino."

Bessie was in the waggon before the speech was finished, demanding to be taken home.

"But I've got to go arrantin' for mother," said the boy.

"Take me home and I'll give you a dollar—five dollars if you say so."

"One's enough," said the boy, climbing into his crazy vehicle with alacrity. "I can get some fishin' tackle, now. Hurrah!"

This unsympathetic remark was not heard by the anxious girl. She caught the whip and gave the bony white beast a tremendous whack, that sent him rushing along the road in dizzy abandon.

"In a hurry, be ye!" said the boy. "Well, my horse has got speed, though he don't generally show it. Get up, Whitey!"

Whitey did wonders, and Bessie rushed into the kitchen just as Mary Ann Jones, laden with toast and tea, was starting to carry supper to the invalid. She let the waiter fall, in her astonishment. The crash brought Mrs. Hart from the bedroom.

"Bessie! I'm so glad you're here!" and the mother laid her hand on her heart, as if to stop its wild fluttering.

That evening the doctor said: "It's well you came. They wouldn't send for you; persisted in refusing. But there's a long job of nursing on, and your mother isn't fit for such work. I wouldn't answer for the consequences if she understood it."

"It's my opportunity," said Bessie, softly, as the doctor went out.

Mrs. Church did not forget the girl who was faithful to her mother. The next winter there came an invitation for mother and daughter to visit her in her Boston home, couched in such terms as made it easy for them to accept. The friendship thus formed resulted in much pleasure to the elders, as well as in opportunities to Bessie, that were not in all cases opportunities for self-denial.

MANNERS AT TABLE.

The time for acquiring good table manners is during childhood, and at home. Years at boarding-school, hours spent over books of social etiquette, may efface vulgar habits, but can never give the ease and grace acquired in childhood at a well-ordered table. A child who is almost a baby can be taught to handle his knife and fork, or spoon if he is too young for those more advanced implements, with a daintiness that will offend no one. Where there are children it is not a good plan to have a wide difference between your every-day and company china, silver and napery. There is too apt to be a wide difference also between every-day and company manners. Let each child have his cover as nicely laid with plate, knife and fork, spoon, napkin and glass as his elders, and remember that he will be sure to note your own use of these articles. Teach him to say "Thank you," and "please," and if he is allowed to leave the table before the meal is ended let him learn to say "Excuse me." We were very much amused at a baby of four summers who recently dined at our table. The meal, interspersed with interesting conversation, was tedious to his infant appetite and intellect, and finally the little man spoke up with, "May I be excused, please? I have enjoyed my dinner very much." Some one at the table—not his father—remarked that that boy bade fair to be "the finest gentleman in America."—*American Agriculturist*.