

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

From the Philadelphia Episcopal Recorder.

TO PRAYERLESS CHILDREN WHO HAVE OR HAD, A PRAYING MOTHER:

THE Bible begins the story of the Redeemer's mercy; but it is only a beginning. The whole history of redemption can never be said to be published, till every name on the pages of the book of life has been read and the leadings of God's mysterious providence, in regard to each one, have been unfolded in eternity.

A few years since I was called from my study to see a stranger. He brought a letter from a friend in Ohio, which stated that he was "a man of the right stamp." His name was Joseph W. Barr, then a student at the Theological Seminary at Andover. He was out of health; and walked nearly thirty miles; and there was nothing very prepossessing in his first appearance. But a few hours' acquaintance was only necessary to discover that he was a man of strong, well balanced mind, of deep piety, and of a breast full of benevolence. One great object of his visit was to restore his health, which had become impaired by study. But instead of lying upon the couch, taking gentle exercise, and "light medicines," he hired himself out, for the vocation of a carpenter; and a better or more diligent and faithful workman, seldom entered the shop. He received high wages, and the family in which he resided can hardly speak of him, to this day, without tears. On leaving us, he carried away a good stock of health, and more of the hearty good wishes, and pure substantial tokens of confidence from his Christian friends, than if he had spent his time in any other way. While in my study, one evening, I requested him to relate me his Christian experience, and the dealings of God in regard to his soul. He began at once, and did it with such simplicity and humility, that I was compelled more than once to turn away my head to conceal my tears. I wrote down the account just as he related it, as soon as he had left me. It is not merely a true account of his conversion, but as nearly as possible, in his own words:

"Among my first recollections is the image of my sainted mother. We lived at the West, in what was then a howling wilderness, but is now the flourishing state of Ohio. My father was a minister and a missionary, and my mother was every way qualified to be his helper. My father was gone much from home in searching for the scattered sheep of Christ's fold, and could not do much towards forming my character. But my mother! she was an angel to me. We lived in a log-house, and had but one large room; of course she had no closet there. But there was a beautiful grove a little back of the house, and there, as early as I can remember anything, I can remember that she took me by the hand and caused me to kneel by her side, while she prayed aloud for my absent father and for me. At first I hardly understood it; but soon learned that God who dwelt far, far above those high trees, could hear her prayer, and was harkening to her sweet voice. She used steadily to lead me there, and always laid her right hand on my head while she prayed; and feelings of deep awe always came over me. She never omitted this practice whilst she lived; and I there had distinct and correct impressions made as to my character, as well as to the character of God.

She died when I was nine years old, and was buried near by. During the most giddy and wicked period of my life I could never forget these impressions. The grove is cut down now, but the spot seems a hallowed spot. Even since the grove has been gone, and since my mother's grave has become level with the surrounding ground, I stood on this spot, and her meek image seemed to be before me, and her voice, tremulous with feeling, seemed to come again to my ears; and I have paused there in tears, chained by a remembrance of her faithfulness and her love. No legacy could she have left me half so precious, nor could her features have been more vividly left upon canvass, than they are upon my memory.

Many years after my mother's death, I was in the hey-day of youth, and in a course of sin truly dreadful. The restraints of conscience

were broken, and there was little that could or did check me, except my early education. My mother had died when I was a mere child, and my father was too far off to reach me otherwise than by his prayers. I will remember many seasons of deep conviction for sin, but which my stubborn heart resisted or stifled. One night at a ball, whither I went, as I should then have said, for rational and innocent amusement, my conscience was suddenly startled.

I was introduced to a young lady for my partner, who came from a distant section of the country. After the dance, in which we were partners, I entered into conversation with her respecting the place from which she came. She gave me many interesting particulars of that then newly-settled place, and among other things mentioned the late sickness of her father, and the many continued kindnesses and attentions of a Mr. Barr, a missionary; stating that Mr. Barr had been to see her father very frequently, and that she felt much attached to him. She knew not my name. I replied, that "Mr. Barr, the missionary, is my father." She started as from an adieu. "Your father! he your father! what would he say if he knew you were here?" Had a dagger been thrust into me, I could not have felt the wound more deeply. It spoiled the evening for me. It ruined my peace; and, though I know not that it can be said to have been the means of my awakening from the sleep of sin, yet I am confident it planted a thorn in my conscience, which was not taken out till I had bowed to God with a broken heart. The giving and receiving of this keen reproof were both, as it were, involuntary, and showed that neither of our consciences could approve of the employment of that evening, if allowed to speak out without restraint.

A few days after the ball, I was present at a communion. At the table many of my near friends were found. The scene before me, and the thoughts of a future, eternal separation, affected me greatly. The sermon, too, reached my conscience; and I might at the close of the services he said to have been under strong convictions for sin. The same day a very devoted Christian was accidentally thrown in my way. He began to address me on the subject of my salvation, without knowing anything of my previous history, or the state of my feelings at that time. Then my heart began to rise with a strength of bitterness which I never knew before. I reproached him, pointing to the inconsistencies in the church; raved like a madman; and while my conscience was grinding me like a millstone, I still kept pouring out my invectives. He bore it all with meekness, perfectly unmoved, and by his gentleness, held up a shield which caused every dart I threw to recoil upon myself. His christian meekness was too much for me; I rose up in wrath and left him. Had he given only one retort—shown one angry feeling, it would have relieved me; but no, I could find no handle. I went out into the woods, smarting under the wounds which had been giving myself; and when I could stand under it no longer, I returned—told my Christian friend my situation and feelings, asked his pardon, and begged his prayers. Truly, as Henry Martyn beautifully says, "And this also I learned, that the power of gentleness is irresistible."

I had now been under deep and pungent convictions for sin for more than three weeks. I could not pray. I could not feel sorry for sin, nor hate it, except as it must bring to me unspeakable ruin. There seemed to be no mercy for me. The heavens were brass, the earth was iron, and I was fast preparing to look up and curse God. Perfectly convinced that I deserved hell, I could not feel regret or humbled. Every feeling of my soul was deep, awakened enmity to the character and government of God.

At length, after struggling with a terrified conscience, and the stirrings of the Spirit of God, I determined to take my own life. It was not the result of a paroxysm of despair, but the cool, deliberate determination of one who casts throw himself upon the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler.

After coming to this determination, I selected my time and place. Not far from me was a considerable waterfall; thither I went, one beautiful morning, fully resolved to return no more. The waters, dark and deep, gathered themselves together in a narrow channel, and after whirling

themselves around several times, as if recoiling from the plunge, they rushed headlong over a time-worn rock, and fell forty feet or more into a large basin beneath. On that rock I placed myself, prepared to do the deed. I looked down into the great basin, forty feet below me, and there the falling waters were boiling and foaming up, as if indignant at being thus cast down—fit emblem, I thought, of the helpless raging of the wicked in the world of despair. I will plunge in, and in five minutes I shall know what hell is, and what is to be my situation for eternity!

I drew myself back to take the plunge. There was no faltering—no shaking of a single muscle—no sensation of fear. But just as I was in the act of leaping, the hand of Omnipotence seemed to be laid suddenly upon me. Every nerve seemed to be paralyzed, and every bodily function to fail. A cold shivering came over me, and I had not the strength of a child. I turned my face away; the beautiful sun was shining; and for the first time a voice, like that of my departed mother's, seemed to say, "Perhaps there may yet be mercy for you." "Yes," I replied, "I will seek it till God takes my life." And there, and on the very spot where I was about to consign soul and body over to endless misery, there the mercy God found me, and there the first ray of hope visited me. O! I can never think of this temptation without feeling that I have been near the pit; and that man, if left by God, will quickly destroy both soul and body."

Before closing this narrative I will add, that this interesting young man lived the life of devoted, consistent, ardent piety. He completed his education, and devoted himself as a missionary to Africa. He was all ready to depart—had taken farewell of his friends, and was as I believe, on his way to the ship which was to convey him to Africa. He arrived at Richmond, Va., on Saturday night, and was to have preached the next day; but about midnight he was seized with the cholera (of which he was the first and only victim in that city) and after twelve hours passed in indescribable pain, he calmly and sweetly fell into the arms of God's messenger, and was carried to that glorious assembly where the praying mother, we doubt not, welcomed to her embrace the child of so many prayers.

How mysterious are the ways of God! He raises up pious friends, and leads them to labour, and pray, and go down to the grave, without seeing any good fruit from the plants which they nourish and water with prayers and tears. But, long after they are gone, their prayers are answered and their labours blessed. Let no praying mother doubt that her prayers will finally be answered. He is mysterious, too, in that he raises up instruments apparently fitted for great usefulness, and then cuts them off just when they promise to be most useful. But his own glorious plans will go on and he will raise up others to take the places of those who are dead. All shall be for the glory of God! O! the blessedness of belonging to a kingdom which cannot be injured by any changes among such beings as we are. Reader! if you belong to this kingdom, be up, be doing, be vigilant, be faithful. Your crown is near, it is sure. If you do not belong to this kingdom, come at once and give yourself to the work of serving God. Repent of all sin, forsake all sin, and that same Redeemer, who saved the dear youth of whom I have been speaking, shall be yours.

THE DUTY OF MOTHERS.

BY MRS. C. L. BARNES.

The sphere occupied by a mother, is one of transcendent importance—the influence she is capable of exerting over her children extends beyond time—it reaches, in its blessed or baleful effects, through eternity. From her, they received their first and strongest impressions. She directs their thoughts, forms their habits, and often fixes their destiny forever! She sits as a sun in the domestic system, and from her are to emanate all those influences which are to enliven, invigorate, and bless, for two worlds, the children of her love. If there is a law, by which children often inherit the looks and features of their parents much more, as by an invisible Daguerreotype, is their moral image imprinted upon their souls. Youth has been justly styled