



The Family Circle.

AN ANSWERED PRAYER.

BY MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

"O give me a message of quiet,"
I asked in my morning prayer:
"For the turbulent trouble within me
Is more than my heart can bear.
Around there is strife and discord,
And the storms that do not cease,
And the whirl of the world is on me—
Thou only canst give me peace."

I opened the old, old Bible
And looked at a page of Psalms,
Till the wintry sea of my trouble
Was smoothed by its summer calms.
For the words that have helped so many,
And the pages that seemed most dear,
Seemed new in their power to comfort,
And they brought me my word of cheer.

Like music of solemn singing
These words came down to me:
"The Lord is slow to anger,
And of mercy great is he;
Each generation praiseth
His work of long renown;
The Lord upholdeth all that fall,
And raiseth the bowed down."

That gave me the strength I wanted!
I knew the Lord was nigh;
All that was making me sorry
Would be better by-and-by.
I had but to wait in patience,
And keep at my Father's side,
And nothing would really hurt me,
Whatever might betide.

HER OFFERING.

BY JANIE MILLER.

The ladies' missionary society connected with the Avenue Church of Payton decided to have a praise meeting. A committee was appointed, and instructed to send a letter to every lady of the church, inviting her to attend the meeting, and to bring with her such a thank-offering as she might be able or willing to give, if it was but a penny laden with prayer. The committee had faithfully obeyed its instructions, and with equal cordiality had invited not only the ladies of the church membership but also those of the congregation. To be sure, one of the committee had expressed a doubt whether it was right to lay what might seem a tax upon some of their sisters.

For instance, there was that pretty Mrs. Berry, who worked so hard to support herself and two children. What was the use of asking her for a thank-offering? But another and wiser one said that Mrs. Berry would like to be invited; a penny from her would outweigh in the sight of the Lord a dollar from many of them; she could join in their worship if nothing more. So the letter was delivered.

All day it had occupied the principal place in Mrs. Berry's thoughts. Not that she was sorry to receive "that begging letter," as the wife of one of the pillars of the church, opposed to missions, had called it, but that she wondered how she could earn one coin to place on the altar of service. She had been left a widow early in life, with two small children to maintain. It took nearly all she could earn to pay the rent of her two rooms and supply the necessities of life; yet she gave a little, a very little, she considered it, to the church each month.

"I have just enough," she mused "to pay the rent, and get Willie the pair of shoes I promised him he should have Saturday; and he needs them badly. I cannot give away what is honestly another's, nor risk my child's health sending him out in such shoes, even if I were willing to break my promise to him. They say that if I have but a penny, to bring it, and I certainly would if I had the penny to give. Ah, me! how poor I am; yet how much better off than so many others in this great city. I have plenty of work and the children are so good and so well."

She wiped away the tears that filled her eyes, and began to shape, with deft fingers a little apron from the skirt of an old white

dress. When it was cut and carefully laid together, she gathered up from the table and floor all the scraps and every thread. With them in her hand she went to the wash-shed where, among the tidily arranged articles, so necessary to have yet so unsightly in a kitchen, hung a large bag nearly full of rags. As she put out her hand to empty it, a thought came into her mind—a precious thought it must have been to brighten her face as it did. Taking down the bag, she re-entered the kitchen, and calling a little girl at play in the other room to come and help mother with her work, she spread a sheet upon the floor and emptied the bag. The little one eagerly gave her assistance, and they began to select the white rags from the colored, putting each kind in a separate pile. The task was almost completed, when Willie, a boy of ten years, came home from school.

"Mother, what on earth are you doing with all those rags? Going to make a carpet?"

"No, dear, I have not enough for that, and these are not fit for carpet-rags. I am sorting them so that they will sell better; after we have done with supper, you and I will take them to Mr. Canfield's. You can haul them in your wagon for me, so that I can sell them."

"Why, mother, I should think that it would be better to keep them till his man comes round; though I would as soon take them as not. But you need not go to the rag warehouse with me. I can sell them to-morrow," and a faint blush tinged the boy's cheek.

"No, Willie, I will go with you; there is nothing to be ashamed of in selling rags. Honest work, or trade, is no disgrace to man or woman, and I do not wish to wait till to-morrow. I suppose two bags of rags seem a small amount to go to the warehouse with; but, my boy, I want a few pennies to take to the praise-meeting to-morrow, and this is the only way I can get them. It is our affair, and God will know 'tis all we can do. Some day, when you are a man and can give me them, I will take dollars."

Mr. Canfield, the wealthy paper-dealer, sat alone in his handsomely-appointed office that evening. The hands of the clock above his desk had not yet marked the hour of seven, when Mrs. Berry and her son, drawing the two bags of rags in his cart, came into the store. The woman was known to him. She had sewed for his mother; besides, she was a member of the same church with himself; he had often seen her there, and admired her two pretty children. He was accounted a good man; honest, and straightforward in all his dealings, and kind to all in his employ; generally a promoter of good works in and out of the church. But to one cause he gave very little. Like many other good people, he did not believe in missions at home or abroad. At least he had not given the matter much thought. He always dropped some change into the basket when there was a collection for the cause. Once, when a friend and a great missionary man from New York had been with him at church, he had given five dollars, because he did not want to seem ungenerous. But, somehow, he did not get much interested.

It was a clear knowledge of all this that made Mrs. Berry's step a little less assured than usual, and threw a shade of hesitation in her speech as he courteously came forward and asked what he could do for them. She had expected to find a clerk there at that time in the evening, who would buy her rags and think no more about it. She would tell him why she came with those rags.

"Willie and I have brought some rags to sell, Mr. Canfield; they are sorted, and I hope that you will allow me as much as you can for them. I want some money for the meeting to-morrow, and this is the only way I have to obtain any extra pennies. Willie is distressed at my coming myself to sell them, but you will appreciate my desire to get at least the penny spoken for in the letter."

"Sit down, Mrs. Berry; my clerks are all away this evening. But I will call a man to weigh your rags."

He opened a door leading into a room where rags of every kind and quality were gathered, some in sacks, others in bins, and loose heaps, and called a man watching there to come and take the rags.

"To what meeting and letter have you

reference?" he asked, returning to his customers.

"Did not Mrs. Canfield receive a circular letter from the ladies of the missionary society, inviting her to attend the praise-meeting to-morrow? That verse in the letter encouraged me to take even so mean an offering as the proceeds of a bag of rags."

The merchant looked with interest at the woman who so dignified her poverty as not to be ashamed of it.

"My mother is out of town. Some one did hand me a letter for her yesterday. I saw that it was unsealed, and put it in my pocket until I had time to ascertain whether it was of sufficient value to forward."

He took the letter out now and hastily glanced through it.

"There are six pounds of the white rags and four of the colored, sir," said the man who had been called to weigh them.

With a thoughtful air, the gentleman took from his pocket two silver quarters and tendered them to the widow.

"I only desired the highest price which was also a just one, Mr. Canfield. The Lord would hardly bless such unfair gains. I had not expected to obtain the half of that, but I will take one of the pieces, and thank you for your kindness."

"Then I shall give the other to Willie for delivering them for me; and Mrs. Berry, I expect that this letter and your bag of rags will bear fruit for the mission cause hereafter." Placing the other silver piece in the hand of the happy boy he bowed them out.

"Are you sorry, Willie, that I came with you; or that I told Mr. Canfield what I desired to do with the money?"

"Oh, no, mother, and I will put my twenty-five cents with yours; then you will have fifty pennies to give. God does help us when we do disagreeable things for his sake, does he not, mother?"

"I think, my boy, that he always helps us in some way, though we may not always be aware of it. But I do not understand what Mr. Canfield meant when he said that my bag of rags would bear much fruit for the mission cause hereafter." Then as they gained their own home she said "Now, Willie, we will not speak of this to a single person."

Left to himself, the merchant returned to his desk; but his pen lay idle as he thought of his visitor and her errand. And this was his summing up of the case, "That woman shames me as a professed follower of Christ. In all the fourteen years of my Christian life, I have never made one sacrifice of personal or mental comfort to further his cause, and she has not only given all the money she could raise, but has done it in a way that a child feared might humiliate her. I would give ten thousand dollars to-night to claim such a boy. I will see that my mother gets this letter and also that it does not fail in its purpose."

Again he read the letter and lingered over the verse of which Mrs. Berry had spoken:

"With fluttering heart and trembling hand,
I brought my little gift and laid
It down upon God's holy altar
I had so prayed that, touched by his
Almighty hand—his dear, pierced hand—
It might become a holy thing
Meet for his service. And now I
Watched for that dear hand to take it up.
My little faith would scarce believe
That his omniscient eye would
Notice take of gift so small, so
Mean, as mine. When lo! it was
Returned so changed, so beautified,
I clasped it to my heart with tears
Of joy. It came so multiplied,
So radiant with his love, I smiled
That I should have withheld it from
His hand so long. The gift was naught,
But God's dear hand upon the gift was all."

He folded up the paper and laid it in his desk; then, taking out his pocket-book, selected from the many there, a bank bill, fresh and new, folded it and placed it in the little envelope that had accompanied the letter, wrote a few lines upon it and for a moment bowed his head in prayer, a prayer for forgiveness of past unfaithfulness, a vow of future consecration. He was all alone in the great store, and the depths of his Christian soul had been reached and stirred as never before.

And that is the way that a great and joyful surprise came to the good ladies of the Avenue Church when they met to hold their praise service. The treasurers, when they came to open their envelopes, held a whispered conversation. Those nearest them caught the words, "Is it not just splendid! How strange! They must have some connection! We'll have them read

last." The president read many messages, sweet words of thanksgiving from full hearts; some all of joy, some of sorrow, tempered with submission, looking beyond the trials of the present life to the joys of the future. Then she said:

"There are messages on two envelopes which our treasurers have asked me to read last and together, feeling assured that they are linked by some tie known only to God. The first reads thus: 'I thank God that nothing is too mean to do him service; that, touched by his dear hand, even a bag of rags can honor him.' The second is: 'I thank God for gifts and mercies which cannot be numbered; to-day I especially praise him because he hath opened mine eyes through the instrumentality of a bag of rags.' Mrs. Smith tells me," continued the president, "that the second envelope contained a one hundred dollar bill. You see, my sisters, that the Lord has touched the small offering of some one among us, and lo! the gift has multiplied more than a hundred-fold."

A CHAT ABOUT PRINTING.

BY JENNIE CHAPPELL.

"Look, look, father! See what a nice little Bible Harry has bought for sixpence. Wasn't it cheap?"

"Indeed it was, Tom. There is surely now no excuse for any one who does not possess a copy of his very own of God's word, and study its precepts for himself. How much do you think was paid for one of the first Bibles ever printed? Guess!"

"Twenty pounds!" cried Harry, thinking that could not possibly fall short of the mark.

"Fifty—a hundred pounds!" supplemented Tom.

"Seven hundred and fifty crowns," their father said, "which, allowing for the far greater value of money in the fifteenth century, must have been equal to over £1,500 of our coinage. That was the sum paid by the King of France for a Bible printed by John Fust, of Mentz. But he purchased the volume under the impression that it was all done by hand, whereas only the illuminated capitals were so produced. He had never seen or heard of a printed book."

"That wasn't quite honest of John Fust, was it?"

"If he intentionally kept back the truth, certainly not. And he nearly got himself into sad trouble in consequence. For he also sold a less highly embellished copy to the Archbishop for 300 marks, and a number of others still more cheaply to persons of inferior rank, each purchaser fancying he had secured a unique manuscript copy. When the Archbishop came to show his prize to the King, the latter was amazed, and they forthwith compared the two books. They found that although the initials and other ornaments painted in gold and colors were different, the substance of the one copy was, letter for letter, the facsimile of the other, all being in what we now call 'Old English,' which, if done by hand, must, for one single copy of the Scriptures, have been the work of a lifetime. But if the King and Archbishop were astonished that one man could have produced two such stupendous works, you may imagine their bewilderment on discovering by inquiry that quite a number of such volumes had been sold! Then they decided that it must have been by the aid of unholy magic that such a result had been accomplished, and it was only by confessing the secret of the new and wonderful art of printing that Fust escaped punishment for a wizard."

"Was Fust the very first man who invented printing?"

"Three friends in Germany—Gutenberg, Fust, and Schoeffer, are said to have been the first to use movable type, similar to that employed at the present day. But Colard Mansion, of Bruges, and William Caxton were also printing books about the same date, or soon after; that is, during the latter half of the fifteenth century."

"Ah, Caxton was an Englishman! I know his name."

"Yes, he was the first English printer, though he did not invent, but only improved on the process, which he had learned, it is believed, from Mansion."—*Christian Paper.*