

## The Family Circle.

### THE DAISY.

There is a flower, a little flower,  
With silver crest and golden eye,  
It welcomes every chr- ing hour,  
And weathers every stormy sky.

It smiles upon the lap of May,  
To sultry August spreads its charms;  
Lights pale October on its way  
And twines December's arms

'Tis Flora's page.—In every place,  
In every season fresh and fair,  
It opens with perennial grace,  
And blossoms everywhere.

On waste and woodland, rock and plain  
Its humble buds unheeded rise.  
The rose has but a summer's reign,  
The daisy never dies

### ROBERT AYLESWORTH'S TEMPTATION.

"Mary?"

"Well, Robert?"

"I have made up my mind positively. That sermon will not answer."

"O, Robert, Robert," cried the young wife reproachfully. "How can you be so foolishly conscientious? It is the best you have ever written, and seems to me inspired."

"Inspired?" said the young minister bitterly. "Yes! inspired by human ambition—the ambition to make a display. Just think of it! The name of Christ does not appear in it three times. It might be read at a college commencement and would be considered sufficiently secular."

"O, but, Robert," said Mrs. Aylesworth, "I am sure the spirit of Christianity is in it. All sermons are not necessarily devotional. Surely it is permitted sometimes to discuss current events, or, at least, polemics?"

"There you have probed the sore to the quick, Mary," said her husband sadly. "All sermons should be devotional. We should be the foil, as it were, to a careless, godless age. What right have we to preach affairs of this life to the exclusion of the noblest themes of all? What theme can compare with that of the salvation of souls?"

"Well, Robert," said his wife regretfully, "if that is so, why did you not think of it before? Here it is Saturday, and this your trial sermon—and O, such a splendid parish! Everything to suit us and the people are more than half-way inclined toward you already."

Rev. Robert Aylesworth looked upon the fair, blue-eyed girl-wife by his side with a strange mixture of tenderness and doubt. No husband anywhere was more firmly convinced of his wife's practical good sense and knowledge of the world as regards its whims and preferences. If the object had been merely to please—if he could admit that as the prime object he felt very sure that her remonstrance was just the thing needed. And then this sermon—the trial sermon, remember—was one which he had been working upon ever since the opening of the correspondence with the West Plains congregation. West Plains prided itself upon being not only a university town but a centre of literary influences in a wide outside circle of society. Lawyers, judges, and one or two writers of rank were numbered among the flock. It would be a great stepping stone for a man not yet thirty, the incumbent of a hopelessly struggling charge like Marion—and Robert Aylesworth well knew that the

correspondence with him was due almost entirely to the honors he had won at college and the seminary, and to certain very much lauded efforts of his in the magazines—his work at Marion had been rather of the character of mission work and exceedingly unpretentious.

The subject of this discourse was the relation of Christianity to ancient religions and it may have been suggested by the theme, already mooted at that time, of a World's Fair Parliament of Religions—an idea so successfully carried out. There was no possible fault in its orthodoxy—perhaps, indeed, it was a rather bold utterance in a church more or less permeated by university influences, and where liberalism was the order of the day. He did not take kindly to the idea of such familiar association of Christian with heathen creeds. So far, so good. But it was not till after the sermon, or thesis it might be called, was finished, committed to memory, and on the eve of delivery, that this sudden qualm seized the candidate. It seemed to come to him in a flash, that this was mere filigree work—that it was oratory and philosophy, but that the soul of true devotion was lacking.

It was a painful, almost a terrible revelation. It was a fierce temptation. He knew the expectations formed; there was no vanity in admitting that to himself. He felt that with that sermon in their ears the definite call would be in his hands the next day. It was a fine salary, and social and literary advantages for which his soul yearned.

But Robert Aylesworth's mind was made up. He remembered the favorite saying of his father of blessed memory: "When in doubt as to the proper course of conduct, remember it is better to make a mistake from a sense of duty than to make a mistake in the direction of self-gratification. Even if you see afterwards that you were too rigorous and did forego some cherished advantage or pleasure you cannot in the first case blame yourself. You acted rightly from the standpoint of the wisdom which you then possessed. But if you violated your conscience at the start you cannot congratulate yourself, even if the event should prove that you did what was otherwise the right thing."

Mary Aylesworth knew his decision from the expression of her husband's face. With all of woman's natural ambition, she had a high ideal of what a Christian minister ought to be, and she knew when she accepted him that she must be prepared for very much of this sort of sacrifices. Still she was inclined to set him down as rather quixotic in his conception of duty at certain times and under certain circumstances, for she had seen many instances of it already. This, however, was a great disappointment to her, but her loyalty and admiration were unshaken.

There was a pause, during which the Rev. Robert Aylesworth fidgeted around in a manner which might have been slightly undignified in one so grave and quiet usually, but his wife knew well the struggle which was going on in his mind. At last he could stand it no longer.

"Mary," he cried, "I want you to tell me just what you think of me. I know you think me foolish, perhaps stubborn, and that I take some pride in this sort of thing."

Mary Aylesworth smiled. "No," said she, "I can't say that. I was only thinking, Robert, that if there was a pestilence in your town, and if every other minister of the gospel should find it con-

venient to leave, you would be found there till death or the end of it, tending their sick and burying their dead for them."

Robert Aylesworth's face was a fine study. It was all aglow with a pride which he could hardly express in words. At all events, he had his wife's lasting confidence and good opinion.

"Why, that, Mary, is a compliment, indeed," he cried as he gently brushed the waves of her golden hair with his grateful kiss. "I could not ask for a higher one. It seems too bad after that for me to oppose you—you, the dearest and sweetest of all—and to feel that in opposing you, I may be, and probably am, taking bread out of your mouth, or, at any rate, clothes off your back."

"O, if you put it that way, Robert," said she, "you condemn my motive out of your own mouth. The vow of the Catholic priest is, first of all, poverty. We cannot afford to take a contrary vow, that is, to be 'on the make,' and when I say we, I mean, of course, that the Protestant minister's wife provides the strongest argument in favor of celibacy if she is to be a stumbling block in the way of her husband's spiritual aims. No, indeed! I do think you are something of a Don Quixote where a point of conscience is concerned, but if I tried to override your sense of duty I should feel that I was furnishing an argument why you should have remained single."

"And that," said Mr. Aylesworth with a fresh caress, "is equivalent to saying why I should have been the most miserable of men. Well, Mary, perhaps as I grow older I will see these things in a more common sense light."

But Mary's heart was now profoundly touched. She rose to her full height and surveyed her husband proudly.

"No, indeed, Robert," she cried almost through her tears. "Not a bit of it! Your highest common sense is to do what you conceive to be your Master's will. I do not want to sit down to a more luxurious meal than you are able to give me or to wear finer clothes than you wear. I married the minister as well as the man, and I hope I will never forget that I am a minister's wife. But, Robert," she continued softly and with a slight hesitation, "I wish you would give me that manuscript. I want to keep it and read it, and I will think as I read it how near I came to proving a stumbling-block in your way. Perhaps it will teach me a lesson."

And so the great battle in Robert Aylesworth's mind was fought and won. The lecture stand was one thing, but the pulpit was another. He was there to preach Christ crucified if anything. If he was there to deal in rhetoric or philosophy, or to show just how well he could do if spurred on to it, he was not doing the work laid out for him in the heavenly call.

The First Church was crowded to suffocation. There were the learned dons of the university in their black gowns and with their graceful mortarboards carefully deposited where there would be no danger of their being crushed. The ministers and elders of all the city churches of his denomination were there, and the rear pews were filled with the wealth and fashion of a very fashionable community. The choir had rehearsed the most elaborate programme in its history. It was perhaps a high compliment of Robert Aylesworth's fame, which had over-leaped the bounds of his little country parish and

which was in fact largely due to the grand record he had made as a scholar and debater at his college, and to several theses of high merit which had found their way from the desk at his simple country manse into the theological and literary magazines.

And Mary Aylesworth, where was she?

Tucked away as unobtrusively as possible in a far corner where she could see him and he could see her—so she believed—for she felt sure that love's eye would find its way over some very brave bonnets and past rows of beautiful faces to draw its highest earthly inspiration from her knowledge of his grand mastery over his own ambition and over hers still more. She was a comparative stranger in the church, though occasionally she would be conscious of watchful eyes levelled in her direction, and more than once she caught the fugitive whisper: "That is the new minister's wife."

The new minister—yes, it seemed to be conceded; but there was still a graceful way for the Session to back out. Nothing in the way of a direct call had as yet been breathed. It was simply an understanding all around that this was his trial sermon, with the odds strongly in his favor. The students of the university were especially favorable to him, for they had greatly admired some of his recent essays. Besides, Robert Aylesworth was an all-around athlete, and had before entering the ministry pulled the strongest stroke in the—eleven. A young minister never loses influence among those of his own sex and age for having been in his day a great sculler or boxer, provided, of course, he does not carry sport into the ministerial life.

Robert Aylesworth was five feet eleven inches—the model stature of manhood—compactly, though rather slightly built, just slight enough for grace. His hair was jet black and his eyes a dark brown. He was called at college by a fellow student who was fond of the epigrammatic style of eulogy, "the best man physically, intellectually and spiritually of that session," and it was the balance and proportion of excellent gifts which had told so largely in his favor. He was a universal favorite, and was the valedictorian of the year. His face was of the pure Greek mould, and he was considered the handsomest young man in the Presbytery.

The prayers and hymns and Scripture were concluded and the young minister ascended the high pulpit and took his text: "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

But even as he began the first extempore sentence, gazing almost as in a trance over that sea of heads, he realized for the first time in its fulness the extent of his rashness. It was one thing to trust himself without notes in his little country congregation where every one was his admiring and intimate friend, and quite another in this crowded and critical audience. His theme was the sinner lost and found and the true aim and direction of Christian preaching as distinguished from theological subtleties.

As he proceeded in his arguments, the opening terror of his situation seemed to have passed away, and instead he became the master of his audience. The words fairly flowed from his lips in the burning inspiration of the hour. The reporters in their unobtrusive corners under the shadow of the organ loft began to frown