



The Family Circle.

MY PSALM.

The crimson glow of sunset skies,
The quiet hush of eve,
The storms that suddenly arise,
The rainbows that they leave,
The minglings of the dark and light,
The never-ending strife—
Thus hath God pointed in my sight
The mystery of life.

Its hidden depths no eye may scan,
Unfathomed, deep they lie;
But He who made it loveth man,
And ever hears his cry;
And all my past a tribute brings
For His sweet balm of peace,
Beneath the shadow of His wings
My soul hath found a lease.

I know not what the future hath
Of happiness or woe;
Enough to know He guards my path
From whom all good gifts flow;
And, if He gave His life for me,
He giveth all things best;
And, though I cannot all way see,
I trust Him for the rest.

The thorns my bleeding feet may pierce;
The way be rough and steep,
The tempests may be wild and fierce,
The dark at times be deep;
But thorns the sweetest roses bear,
And ways so rough and steep
But bring us to those levels where
No angry tempests sweep.

And He, who ever bears me up,
Hath trod this path in pain;
His lips have drunk each bitter cup,
Shall my poor heart complain?
Ah no, but sing from day to day,
"He doeth all things well,"
And marvel at His love, and pray
In His dear sight to dwell.

—Watchman.

"I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE."

Came to me in early days,
Ere I entered life's thick maze,
A low voice, that spoke to me
Of a heart's fidelity,
As like blessing-music fell
Words that now I know so well,
"I will never leave thee."

Since that day how frequently
They have come again to me!
When I stood on mountain heights
Happy in the morning lights,
Or within the shadowy vale
When the skies grew cold and pale;
When the flowers in crowds sprang up,
And I drank of pleasure's cup,
Or when faded leaves were spread
O'er my path, the voice still said,
"I will never leave thee."

Times have been when tempests beat,
And I suffered great defeat;
When loved comrades fell away,
Till it seemed that none would stay;
But amid the storm's wild rush
There has come a solemn hush
Over life's too-troubled sea,
For a friend has said to me,
"I will never leave thee."

Now and then my days have been
Brilliant in a sunny scene,
And, content with pleasures dear,
I have felt the world most near;
But to keep my heart at rest
On the highest and the best
Lest I clung too fast to earth,
He has whispered through the mirth,
"I will never leave thee."

What can come of grief or song
While I pace the path along
That shall cause His words to fail?
Nay, they always must prevail;
Be the future what it may,
There is light to cheer the way,
And my heart shall know not fear,
While at every step I hear,
"I will never leave thee."

Now the shadows longer grow,
And the day of life below,
Drawing to a speedy close,
Brings the hour of still repose.
Shall I dread the gloaming? Nay,
Through the mists I see a ray,
And Christ's voice, not loud, but deep,
Whispers, as I fall asleep,
"I will never leave thee."

—Christian World.

HARD TIMES CONQUERED.

BY MRS. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

About seventy years ago, a physician with a young family springing up around him, consulting his wife, as all good husbands find it prudent to do, bought a large farm in one of our New England States where every farmer truly earns his living by the sweat of his brow. Both felt that nowhere could their children be trained to industry and frugality so thoroughly as on a good farm.

Of course the Doctor was obliged to "run in debt" for this property and give a mortgage on the place. The payments were to be made quarterly, and promptly, or the whole would be forfeited and revert to the original owner. In those days physicians were not likely to become millionnaires in a hurry, and though his practice was large the pay was small and not always sure. He therefore looked to the farm to bring forth the means to release him from the bondage of debt; and the children, even to the youngest, were taught to labor for, and look forward eagerly to, the time "when we have paid for the farm!"

The creditor was the doctor's father-in-law, through his first wife, and while the good old gentleman lived, if by any mishap or over press of business the quarterly payment had been delayed, it would have been kindly excused. But for the ten or fifteen years that he lived after the sale of the farm, there had not been one delay in payment, though now and then there would come a time when it was very hard work to secure the needed sum in time, for even in the olden days "hard times" were often found prowling about, to the great terror of our hard-working New England farmers. But little by little the heavy debt was diminishing, and they were looking forward, hopefully, to the year of Jubilee, when they could sit under their own vine and fig tree with none to molest and make them afraid.

At this period the father-in-law died. He had but two children—daughters. The younger, the Doctor's wife, died childless. The elder married a hard, close, scheming man, who, knowing that his wife and children would inherit this property, in case the payments were not promptly met, lost no opportunity of remarking that Dr. Mason's farm would doubtless soon come into his hands, as with his large family he must fail by and by.

The financial troubles which the war of 1812 had caused, as all wars are sure to do, were not yet adjusted. Money was scarce and payments very difficult. Ten children now filled the old house with merriment and gladness; but they were to be clothed and educated. Let us see how successfully they had borne the burden which, since their grandfather's death, was pressing heavily upon their parents.

At the time of which we write, among other crops, rye was extensively raised. It was used for food among the farmers quite as much as wheat, but was also valuable for other purposes. When full-grown, but still in the milk, large quantities were cut to be used for "braiding." The heads were used for "fodder;" the stalks, after being soaked in strong hot soap-suds, were spread on the grass for the sun to whiten. When sufficiently bleached and ready for use, they were cut at each joint, the husk stripped off, and the straw thus prepared tied in pound bundles for sale.

Bonnets, then, meant something more than a small bit of silk or velvet with a flower or feather attached, and the "straw braid" for making them was in great demand. Boys and girls were alike taught to braid, and the long winter evenings were not spent idly. Dr. Mason raised large crops of rye, and each child, almost as soon as weaned, was taught to braid, and was soon able to do much by it toward clothing himself. At six years of age, a dollar a week was easily earned; at eight, three dollars; and in something of that proportion up to the eldest.

Does anyone think such a life, with such an object in view, was hard or cruel? Never was there a greater mistake. It was of immense value to these young spirits. They had something real, that they could understand, to labor for. There was life and courage and true heroism in it. An education—with here and there, to be sure, some rough places to pass over—which was worth more to them than all the money millionnaires bequeath their sons and daughters—an education which prepared them in after life to be courageous and self-helpful.

It is this kind of training that has made New England's sons and daughters strong and self-reliant, and the lack of it which makes these hard times such a horror, that we hear of so many who seek death by their own hands as preferable to the struggle for better times.

In the long winter evenings, when the labor of the day was over, the children home from school, and the "chores" all finished, the candles were lighted and the evening work began. The mother in her corner was busy making and mending for her large family.

The doctor, if not with the sick, smoked and read opposite her. The children gathered round the long table in the middle of the room where lay the school-books and straw all ready machined for braiding, while the old fire-place, heaped with blazing logs of hickory, oak, and fragrant birch, made the room warm and cheerful. Here, with their books fastened open before them to the next day's lessons, the children with nimble fingers plaited the straw and studied their lessons at the same time. For children taught to be industrious usually carry the principles thus developed into the school-room, and are ambitious to keep as near the head of the class as possible.

Such a family as this was well equipped to meet and conquer adversity. For several days Dr. Mason had been unusually grave and silent. All noticed it, but no remarks were made until evening, when he came to supper, so unmistakably worried and despondent that his wife enquired if he was not well.

"Yes, well enough. But, Lucy, I have so far been unable to collect money for our quarterly payment. So much is due me that I had no fears but that enough would be promptly paid to save me any trouble."

"How much is lacking?"
"Not quite a hundred dollars; but it might as well be thousands for any chance I now see of getting it in season. There is now so much sickness about, that, as you know, I have had no rest, and little time to collect money. If not ready before midnight to-morrow we are ruined. I have kept it from you as long as I dared, still hoping that those who ought to pay me would do so."

"Have you told them how very important it is that you have the money?"

"No; I did not wish to speak of it. Mr. H. is watching greedily for a 'slip,' and we need expect no mercy at his hands. Under our hard labor and good care this farm has risen greatly in value—too much so for him to spare us an hour, if he can once get hold of it. I am about discouraged. It is the darkest spot we have seen yet. But I must be off and shall probably be kept out all night. To think there is not forty-eight hours between us and ruin! And my hands so tied by several bad cases that I may not find one hour to try and make up the little that is needed."

For a few minutes after the doctor left, the children stood silent and sad, watching their mother. At last she said,

"Children, we can help father through this, and save our home, if you are willing to submit to some little self-denial. No; I should have said to great self-denial. Each of you has worked diligently to buy new garments, and you are so happy and proud to see you all neat and comfortable. But to help father, are you willing to let me try to clean, mend, or make over your old clothes, and use what you have earned to help brighten this dark day? The braid you have on hand, and what is now due at the store, is all your own, or to be expended for your own clothes, and if each one of you is not perfectly willing, I don't wish you to give it up."

It was a beautiful sight to see those eager faces watching their mother, ready to answer the moment she had finished; for in the olden time children were taught that it was disrespectful to interrupt anyone when speaking, even when, as in this case, it was difficult to keep silent. But the reply when given was prompt, enthusiastic, and what she had confidently looked for.

"Thanks, dear children! Now, then, hasten. First bring me all your braid, and let us see how much it will come to."

The braid, in ten-yard rolls, was brought and its value estimated.

"With that which is now due us at the store we have nearly sixty dollars! Well done, for all these little fingers! But now we must devise a way to make up the remainder. Your father spoke last night of a large quantity of straw which, if cut, would bring in something. He will be away all night. If you work well, we can cut many pounds before midnight. Now, girls, help me wash the dishes, while your brothers bring, before dark, the straw we can cut to-night."

By the time the candles were lighted, all was ready to begin.

The younger children were excused at their usual bedtime, but the others worked with their mother till the tall clock in the corner struck one. Then all retired for a few hours' rest.

Dr. Mason returned home in season for breakfast, and his wife enquired if the eldest son could drive her over to the neighboring town to dispose of some braid for the children. He replied that he must be gone again all day, and neither son nor team could well be spared from important work at home. But a strange thing followed this implied refusal. Mrs. Mason, who never allowed her plans or wishes to interfere with her husband's, now repeated her request, and urged it till he yielded, from sheer surprise apparently, that his wife could be so persistent.

The doctor went his usual round, and the

mother and son departed on their mysterious errand. Their business accomplished, they returned well satisfied and ready for supper when the father arrived.

A deeper gloom was on his face when he entered; but no word was spoken till all were seated at the table. Too much absorbed in his troubled thoughts to notice the suppressed excitement plainly visible on every face, or if he noticed, knowing they understood his fears, he did not wonder.

Then, in a slightly agitated voice, his wife enquired:

"Have you been successful in obtaining the money?"

He shook his head, but remained silent. Each young quivering face was turned first toward him, then with earnest, questioning glance to the mother.

"Do not be discouraged, dear, even at this late hour."

"Are you wild, Lucy? There are but six hours between us and ruin. Can you talk of hope now? I have none, none."

With a warning gesture to the children she rose, stepped to her husband's chair and, passing her arm round his neck, said, gently, caressingly:

"Yet still hope on, my husband; God will not forsake us."

He moved impatiently from under her arm; but, as he did so, she dropped a roll into his bosom and turned toward her chair.

"Lucy! Lucy! what is this? Where did you get it?"

All was wild excitement. Each child laughing, sobbing, shouting, but one glance from that strong but gentle mother quelled the confusion, and she replied:

"It is our children's offering, and sufficient to make up the needed sum. I persisted in going away this morning against your wishes, because I saw no other escape. We cut the straw last night—many willing hands made quick work; I sold it, and their braid added to it, with what was already due them, completed the sum."

Those who witnessed that scene will never forget it: Dr. Mason with his arm around his wife, and both in tears, calling her all happy names; the children clinging about their parents, so joyful that home was saved and they had helped to save it.

"Put Charlie into the waggon, quick. If he fails me not, the six miles between here and M—will be the shortest I ever rode. I shall be home before bedtime to thank you all. I cannot now. I hope we shall never come so near ruin again."

And they never did. In two years the last dollar Dr. Mason vowed he would never owe anyone a cent. He kept his vow.—Christian Union.

MERRY CHRISTMAS FOR TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

BY MARY L. BOLLES BRANCH.

Times were dull, and the shop where Richard Flint worked was closed for two months, right in the cold weather, too. This fell harder on some of the other men than on him, for he had a little, a very little hoard laid by for a rainy day, and this would suffice to meet the rent of the two rooms his family occupied, and to keep them in fuel, and to provide plain potatoes and bread for four months, till work began again. But for a bit of meat, or a cup of tea, or any little added luxury whatever, they must depend on chance jobs that Richard might get from day to day—a most uncertain reed to lean upon.

"I am so glad we made out to get good shoes all around in the fall," said Mrs. Flint, as she sat busily sewing on a little coat for Benny, made out of a pair of old pants that had been his father's. "If we can only all keep well, I sha'n't worry one bit."

"No use to worry," said Richard, sighing nevertheless. "There will at least be snow-storms between now and February, and I can get shovelling to do."

"Wish I could shovel too!" exclaimed little Benny; but he was only five years old, with no harder duty before him than to be sunshine in his parents' hearts all through the dark days. There was little fat rosy Jane, a year younger.

By God's blessing they did all keep well, and there was not lacking a quiet cheer in the two humble rooms, while the wife sang at her work, the children played and laughed, and Richard did all he could, coming and going, and frequently earning a couple of shillings or more by some odd job. And the little ones really grew fat and rosy on the hot baked potatoes and the good plain bread. But as the days wore by, Christmas drew near, and the great gay city was all in a flutter of joyous excitement, the stores all up and down the streets were brilliant and enticing, and bright expectant little faces peered in at the beautiful windows. Mrs. Flint saw it all one morning when she was out on some errand, and suddenly realized through all her care that Christmas was coming, and she had two little