



### The Family Circle.

#### CONTENTMENT.

BY M. E. KENNEY.

I ask not that my path should always be  
By waters still,  
Nor do I pray that thou shouldst shelter me  
From every ill.  
I am content, dear father, if thy love  
Doth choose my way,  
If I may walk so closely at thy side  
I cannot stray.

I do not pray from sorrow's chastening touch  
I may be free,  
Nor that thy pitying tenderness would lift  
My cross from me;  
I know thy wisdom seeth greater gain  
In every loss,  
And that it is thy love and thought for me  
That sends my cross.

When thou wouldst have me serve thee, dearest  
Lord,  
I do not ask  
That I may serve as best it pleaseth me,  
And choose my task.  
Enough it is thou deignest to accept  
Service from me.  
Whatever task is set by thy dear hand  
Shall joyous be.

If thou wouldst have me wait with folded hands  
Shall I refuse  
Because my love for thee some worthy task  
Would gladly choose?  
Nay, since thy will is wholly worked in me  
And I am thine,  
Can I not fully trust myself to thee  
And not repine?  
—American Messenger.

#### CAPTAIN JANUARY.

(By Laura E. Richards.)

##### CHAPTER VI.—THE SIGNAL.

Quietly passed the days, the weeks, the months, in the lonely tower on the rock fronting the Atlantic surge. Winter came, and folded it in a white mantle, and decked it with frost-jewels. Like a pillar of ice, the tower shone in the keen brilliance of the northern sun; but within was always summer, the summer of perfect peace and contentment. To the child Star, winter was always a season of great delight; for Captain January had little to occupy him out of doors, and could devote much of his time to her. So there were long, delightful "jack-knife times," as Star called them, when the Captain sat fashioning all sorts of wonderful trifles with his magic knife, the child sitting at his elbow and watching him with happy eyes. There were "story times," instituted years before, as soon as Star had learned to sew on patchwork; for as for sewing without a story to listen to, "that," said Star, "is against my nature, Daddy. And you don't want me to do things that are against my nature, do you?" So whenever the squares of gay calico came out, and the golden head bent to and fro over them, like a paradise bird hovering over a bed of gaudy flowers, the story came out too, the fire crackling an accompaniment, sputtering defiance to the wind that whistled outside. Some tale of the southern seas, and the wild tropic islands, of coral reefs and pearl-fisheries, sharks and devil-fish; or else a whaling story, fresh and breezy as the north, full of icebergs, and seal-hunts over the cracking floes, polar bears, and all the wild delights of whale-fishing.

Then, on fine days (and oh, but the days are fine, in these glorious northern winters!) there was much joy to be had out of doors. For there was a spot in the little meadow,—once of gold-flecked emerald, now of spotted pearl,—a spot where the ground "tilted," to use Star's expression, suddenly down to a tiny hollow, where a fairy spring bubbled out of the rock into a fairy lake. In summer, Star rather despised this lake, which was, truth to tell, only twenty feet long and ten feet wide. It was very nice for Imogen to drink from and to stand in on hot days, and it did many lovely things in the way of reflecting blue skies and fleecy clouds and delicate

bracerics of leaf and bough; but as water, it seemed a very trifling thing to a child who had the whole sweep of the Atlantic to fill her eyes, and who had the breakers for her playfellows and gossips.

But in winter matters were different. All the laughing lips of ripples, all the white tossing crests of waves, must content themselves with the ice-bound rocks, till spring should bring them their child-commander again; and the little sheet of dark crystal in the hollow of the meadow had things all its own way, and mirrored back her bright face every day. The little red sled, launched at the top of the "tilt," came skimming down the slope, and shot like an arrow over the smooth ice, kept always clear of snow by the Captain's ever-busy hands; or else, when tired of coasting, the child would plant her small feet wide apart, and slide, and run, and slide again, till the pond could have cracked with pleasure, if such a thing had been in accordance with its principles.

But of all the joyous hours, none was more welcome to the child than that after the simple supper was cleared away and the room "redded up." Then, while fire and lamplight made their merriest cheer, the table was drawn up to the warmest spot; Star took her place upon Captain January's knee, and the two heads, the silver one and the golden, bent in absorbed interest over "Willum Shakespeare" or the Good Book.

Generally the Captain read aloud, but sometimes they read the parts in turn; and again sometimes the child would break off, and recite whole passages alone, with a fire and pathos which might have been that of Maid Marjorie, swaying at her childish will the heart of Sir Walter and his friends. So quietly, in the unbroken peace which love brightened into joy, the winter passed.

At Christmas, they had, as usual, a visit from the faithful Bob, who brought all his many pockets full of candy and oranges and all manner of "truck," as he called it, for Missy Star. Also he brought a letter and a box directed only to "Captain January's Star." The letter, which the child opened with wondering eagerness, being the first she had ever received, was from Mrs. Morton. It was full of tender and loving words, wishes for Christmas cheer and New Year blessing, and with it was a photograph of the beautiful face, with its soft and tender eyes, which Star remembered so well. On the back was written, "For little Star, from Aunt Isabel." And the box? Why that was quite as wonderful in its way. For it contained a beautiful present for the Captain, and oh! oh! such a doll! Other children have seen such dolls, but Star never had; a blue-eyed waxen beauty, with fringed lashes that opened and shut, rose-leaf cheeks, and fabulous wealth of silky flaxen curls. Also it had a blue velvet frock, and its under-clothing was a wonder to behold; and the box was full of other frocks and garments.

Star took the doll in her arms with delighted awe, and seemed for a few moments absorbed in her new treasure. Presently, however, a shadow crossed her bright face. She glanced at Bob and the Captain, and seeing that they were both engaged in busy talk, she quietly went up to her own room, carrying the doll with her. Here she did a strange thing. She crossed the room to the corner where Mrs. Neptune sat, with her back rigid, protesting against circumstances, and set the radiant stranger down beside her; then, with her hands clasped behind her, and brows bent, she considered the pair long and attentively. Truly they were a strange contrast; the delicate, glowing, velvet-clad doll, and the battered old wooden image, with eyes of snail-shells and hair of brown sea-moss. But when Star had finished her scrutiny, she took the beautiful doll, and buried it deep under velvets and satins at the very bottom of the great chest. This done, she kissed Mrs. Neptune solemnly, and proceeded to adorn her with a gorgeous Eastern scarf, the very gayest her treasure-house could afford.

Meanwhile, in the room below, the talk went on, grave and earnest. Trouble it was, too, on one side; for though the Captain sat quietly in his chair, and spoke in his usual cheerful voice, Bob Peet's rough tones were harsh and broken, and he rose from his place once or twice and moved uneasily about the room.

"Cap'n," he said, "tan't so. Don't tell me! Strong man—hearty—live twenty years yet—like's not thirty! Uncle o'mine—Punksquid—hundred and three—pear's chicken."

Captain January puffed at his pipe in silence for some minutes. "Bob," he said, presently, "it ain't always as it's given to a man to know his time. I've allers thought I should take it particular kind if it 'corded with the Lord's views to let me know when he was ready for me. And now that he has let me know, and moreover has set my mind at ease about the child that it's a pleasure to think of, why, it ain't likely I shall take it anyway but kind. Thankin' you all the same, Bob, as have been a good mate to me, and as I sha'n't forget wher-ever I am. But see now!" he added hastily, hearing a sound in the room above. "You understand, Bob? I h'ist that signal, as it might be to-morrow, and I keep her flyin' night and day. And so long as you see her flyin', you says, 'Cap'n's all right so far!' you says. But you keep a sharp lookout; and if some mornin' you don't see her, you says, 'Sailin' orders!' you says, and then you calls Cap'n Nazro, as never failed in a kindness yet, nor ain't likely to, to take the wheel, and you put for this island. And Cap'n Nazro he takes the "Huntress" in, and then goes straight-way and sends a telegraft to the lady and gentleman, sayin' as Cap'n January has sailin' orders, and they please to come and take the child, as lawfully to them belongs. And you, Bob—"the old man's steady voice faltered a little, as he laid his hand on the other's arm—"You'll do all you can, well I know. For she'll take it hard, ye see. She has that depth o' love in her little heart, and never nobody to love 'cept me since she were a baby, that she'll take it cruel hard. But the Lord'll have her in mind! and you'll stand by, Bob, and bear a hand till the lady and gentleman come."

Bob Peet held out his honest brown hand, and the two men shook hands with a certain solemnity; but before either of them could speak again, Star came singing down the stairs, and summoned them both to play at ball with the oranges. And so it came to pass that a little blue signal was hoisted at the top of the white tower, and fluttered there bravely in sun and wind. And every time the "Huntress" went thundering by (which was twice a week at this season instead of every day), Bob Peet looked out anxiously from the wheelhouse window, and seeing the little banner, took cheer, and rubbed his hands and said, "Cap'n's all right so far!"

And Captain January, whenever there came the clutch and stab at his heart, and the struggle for breath, which he had felt for the first time that September day (but ah! how many times since, and with what increasing persistence!) would creep to the stairway beside which hung the signal lines, and lay his hand on them, and wait; then, when the spasm passed, would pass his hand across his face and humbly say, "Whenever it seems right, Lord! A step nearer! and thou havin' the child in mind," and so go cheerfully about his work again.

There were not many more steps to take. Spring came, and the little meadow was green again. Robins and blue-birds fluttered above the great pine-tree, and swallows built their nests under the eaves of the tower itself. The child Star sang with the birds, and danced with the dancing leaves, all unconscious of what was coming; but the old Captain's steps grew slower and heavier, day by day, and the cheery voice grew feeble, and lost its hearty ring, though never its cheeriness. "I'll set here in the porch, Jewel Bright," he would say, when the child begged him to come for a scramble on the rocks. "I think I'll jest set here, where I can see ye an' hear to ye. I'm gettin' lazy, Star Bright; that's the truth. Yer old Daddy's gettin' lazy, and its comf'tabler sittin' here in the sun, than scramblin' round the rocks."

And Star would fling herself on his neck, and scold and caress him, and then go off with a half-sense of disappointment to her play. Very, very careful Captain January had to be, lest the child should suspect that which he was determined to keep from her to the last. Sometimes he half thought she must suspect, so tender was she in these days; so thoughtful, so mindful of his lightest wish. But "'tis only the woman growin' up in her," he decided; and looking back, he remembered that she had not

once broken his pipe (as she had been used to do every three or four weeks, in her sudden rages) since last September.

At last there came a day when the Captain did not even go out to the porch. It was a lovely May morning, bright and soft, with wreaths of silvery fog floating up from the blue water, and much sweet sound of singing birds and lapping waves in the air. Making some pretence of work at his carpenter's bench, the old man sent Star out to loose the cow and lead her to the water; and when she was gone, he tottered to his old chair and sat down heavily. There was no pain now, only a strange numbness, a creeping coldness, a ringing in the ears. If it might "seem right" to let him wait till the "Huntress" came by! "It's nearly time," he said half aloud. "Nearly time, and 'twould be easier for the child."

At this moment, through the open doorway, came the silver sound of Star's voice. "But I don't think there can be any harm in my just telling you a little about it, Imogen. And the floor is the paved work of a sapphire; sapphire is a stone, just like the water over there, in the bluest place, and oh! so clear and bright, Daddy says. He saw one once. And there will be most beautiful music, Imogen. Oh! you can't think what lovely music Daddy Captain will play on a harp. I know he will, 'cause he will be a spirit of just men made perfect; and that will be a great thing, Imogen; for he has never known how to play on anything before; and—" Ah! the sweet, childish prattle; but already it was growing faint upon the old man's ears.

"Star Bright!" he called; and the dancing shape came flying, and stood on tiptoe in the doorway. Steady, now, January! keep your voice steady, if there is any will left in you. Keep your head turned a little away, lest there be any change in your face, yet not turned enough to make her wonder. "Star Bright," said Captain January, "it's about—time—for the "Huntress"—to be along, isn't it?"

"Yes, Daddy," said the child; "she's just in sight now. Shall I go down and wave to Bob as he goes by?"

"Yes, Honeysuckle," said the old man. "And—and wait to see if he come ashore. I think—likely—Bob'll come ashore to-day. He was goin' to bring—something—for me. Is there a squall comin' up, Jewel Bright?"

"A squall, Daddy?" said the child, wondering. "Why, there isn't a cloud in the sky."

"Jes' so!" said Captain January. "I—only jist asked. Good by, Star Bright."

"Dear Daddy! Good by!" cried the child, and she sped away over the rocks.

So dark! and not a cloud in the sky. If he might have looked once more, with those fast-darkening eyes, at the little blessed face which held all the world in it! If he could call her back now, and kiss her once more, and hold her little hand—No! no! steady, January! steady now, and stand by!

Quite dark now. But that does not matter. No need of light for what is now to be done. Slowly the old man raises himself; feels for the wall, creeps along beside it. Here is the line. Is there any strength left in that benumbed arm? Yes! "For the child, dear Lord, and thou helpin' me, as ever has been!"

Down comes the signal, and the old man creeps back to his chair again, and composes himself decently, with reverent, folded hands and head bowed in waiting. "He holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand. Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. Amen! so be it!"

Wave, little Star! wave your little blue apron from the rocks, and laugh and clap your hands for pleasure, as the ripples from the steamer's bow break in snowy foam at your feet. Bend to your oar, Bob Peet, and send your little black boat flying over the water as she never flew before! and press on, friendly "Huntress," to your port, whence the winged message may speed on its way to the stately lady with the tender eyes, who waits for tidings in her distant home. For Captain January's last voyage is over, and he is already in the haven where he would be.

THE END.

OF ALL THE MEANS placed by Providence within our reach, whereby we may lead souls to him, there is one more blessed than all others—intercessory prayer.—From "Gold Dust."