



The Family Circle.

THE SILVER PLATE.

BY MARGARET J. PRESTON.

They passed it along from pew to pew,
And gathered the coins, now fast, now few,
That rattled upon it; and every time
Some eager fingers would drop a dime
On the silver plate with a silver sound.
A boy who sat in the aisle looked 'round
With a wistful face—"Oh, if only he
Had a dime to offer, how glad he'd be!"
He fumbled his pockets, but didn't dare
To hope he should find a penny there;
And much as he searched, when all was
done,
He hadn't discovered a single one.

He had listened with wide-set, earnest eyes,
As the minister, in a plaintive wise,
Had spoken of children all abroad
The world who had never heard of God;
Poor, pitiful pagans who didn't know,
When they came to die, where their souls
would go;
And who shrieked with fear, when their mothers
made
Them kneel to an idol-god—afraid
He might eat them up—so fierce and wild
And horrid he seemed to the frightened
child.
"How different," murmured the boy, while
his
Lips trembled, "how different Jesus is!"

And the more the minister talked, the more
The boy's heart ached to its inner core;
And the nearer to him the silver plate
Kept coming, the harder seemed his fate
That he hadn't a penny (had that sufficed)
To give, that the heathen might hear of
Christ.
But all at once, as the silver sound
Just tinkled beside him, the boy looked
round;
And they offered the piled-up plate to him,
And he blushed, and his eyes began to swim.

Then bravely turning, as if he knew
There was nothing better that he could do,
He spoke, in a voice that held a tear,
"Put the plate on the bench beside me here."
And the plate was placed, for they thought
he meant
To empty his pockets of every cent.
But he stood straight up, and he softly put
Right square in the midst of the plate—his
foot,
And said with a sob controlled before,
"I will give myself—I have nothing more!"
—*Children's Work for Children.*

A LESSON TO LEARN—A WORK TO DO.

BY HOPE LEDYARD.

"Aunt Hattie? My bow ain't tied!"
"Aunt Hattie, my hands and face is
dirty!"
"Aunt Hattie, mamma says, can you
come and take the baby—right away?"
"Tie your own bow; you're old enough!
You little plague, you, I washed your face
not an hour ago! Dear me, I wonder if she
thinks I've twenty pair of hands?"
The nursery where these words were
spoken was a scene of dire confusion. Three
boys were completing their toilets; they had
evidently been indulging in a pillow-fight,
and sly pinches and kicks were exchanged
between them while little Dick was being
washed by auntie, a slight, fair haired girl of
eighteen.
"Ain't it jolly that it's a holiday?" said
Tom, the eldest. "Won't we tease you,
Hat?"
"Tom Dallas, I'll tell your mother. You
are too impertinent."
"Will you keep still, Dick? I'd rather
wash an eel any day!"
"Not ready yet? Why, Hattie, your
brother is waiting, and you know he dislikes
our being late."
"I'm sure I don't care if he does. I can't
get up any earlier."
Mrs. Dallas gave a sigh, and merely say-
ing, "Well, the boy that is ready first shall
hold sister after breakfast," she went down
the stairs.

The mere sight of mamma had quieted
the boys, and not many minutes after they
were seated at the table, impatiently eying
the omelette and potatoes. Some one had
to cut the bread, spread the butter, help the
potatoes and omelette and pour the coffee,
and Hattie, considering she had done her
part upstairs, did not attempt to help in the
matter, while Mr. Dallas, as he was in the
habit of being waited on every day lest he
should miss his train, took no notice that
breakfast was half through before his wife,
who had been kept awake by a teething baby,
had tasted a mouthful.

"Mamma, it's a holiday; are we going to
have pudding?"

Mrs. Dallas waited a moment. If only
Hattie would offer to make it! But Hattie,
who thought to herself, "If she asks me I
suppose I must," kept silence, and the mother
said, "Oh yes; you shall have pudding,
and a nice cake for tea if I hear no quarrel-
ling."

There was a rent in Tom's second-best
pants which only mother's fingers could
mend, and Mr. Dallas had brought home a
"little copying" which meant at least an
hour's work, and the afternoon must be
free, for mamma had set her heart on giving
Hattie some good time on the holiday.

"If only I could make her contented and
happy! It is such a change for her, poor
child, and yet—nothing but time can
brighten matters. By-and-by she will make
friends, and when baby is older I can let her
have more time; but it is hard for both of
us."

Meanwhile Hattie Dallas was standing at
her window thinking. "I have nobody to
love me—nothing pleasant happens to me—
I wish I were dead! I hate children; they
tease me to death! Johnny is the most
aggravating boy I ever saw. Oh, what a
difference between this fourth and the last!"
and at the thought tears came.

A little more than a year before Hattie's
father had died, and on the fourth her Sun-
day-school teacher, knowing that the young
girl was soon to leave her native place to live
with a brother whom she had seldom seen,
had invited her to spend the day on the river
with her, and the two had had a long and
pleasant talk.

"Mrs. Hartz thought I'd make such
friends of the boys! We didn't know what
torments they were! And then she said I'd
have friends here; but the girls stand off so
—not one of them has called a second time.
O Father, Father! I feel so old, and
and—"

Who was that smiling up at her? What!
Could it be? Yes, the lady was coming in
at the gate, and it was—yes, it was—Mrs.
Hartz! In another moment Hattie was at
the door, and Mrs. Dallas, hearing her bright,
affectionate words, wondered if "that could be
Hattie." She would have wondered still
more if she had seen the girl, who had seem-
ed so cold and reserved toward her, throw
her arms about Mrs. Hartz's neck and burst
into a flood of tears. But Mrs. Hartz was
not surprised; she could understand better
than Mrs. Dallas how very hard her new life
seemed to Hattie; yet she did not give her
any hope of change.

"I could stand it if it were for a year or
two; but—it may go on forever! I see no
way out."

"Hattie, did you ever think why you are
here?"

"Why? I suppose because I have just
enough of an income to dress on, and I pay
for my home by being useful. Oh, how I
hate it!"

"No; I don't think that is why, because
God puts you here. I think you are here
to learn something which you could not
learn elsewhere; to do something for the
dear Lord that no one else can do; and
when you have learned the lesson and done
the work you may be moved—not before.
I'll tell you how it was with me once. When
I was first married my father and sister-in-
law lived with me. They were not at all
congenial; and at first I made myself utterly
miserable wishing I could have my home to
myself, and so forth. But at last a dear old
clergyman told me just what I have told
you, and I began to watch and see what I
had to learn and what to do. My father-in-
law was apt to find fault, and I had to be
watchful both to give him less occasion and
to take it patiently. And at last, when I
was so busy learning my lesson that I had
quite forgotten the work I might accomplish,
my sister-in-law came to me one day and
told me she had decided to try to follow
Christ; that I had won her to the decision.

Ah, Hattie, how I blessed my old friend!
Then, when they were no longer thorns in
my side, those two were taken out of my
home, and I had my wish: I had my dear
husband and children to myself—for a little
while."

There was a silence, for the deep, crape
veil and widow's cap told the rest of the
story. "Dear Hattie, if you can but put
your heart in your daily life, if you can
give up watching for a change, and live each
day for Christ's sake, you will be happy,
with no young friends, even with teasing
nephews and a busy, overtaken sister.
Mrs. Dallas is a Christian, is she not?"

"Oh, yes! only I suppose she doesn't
think me one."

"Don't be so sure. I've no doubt she is
wishing she could brighten you up. It must
be hard to see you looking so—sad, shall I
say? as you looked when I caught your eye
at the window."

Hattie laughed and blushed.

"But am not I keeping you from some
duty?"

"Oh, no, indeed!"

"But this is a holiday, and, with the chil-
dren all home, there must be extra baking,
and so on."

Hattie remembered the pudding and cake,
and looked conscious. "Ah! I see there is
something, and I have another call to make.
I shall be in the village for a week or two,
so I shall see you again. Good by, dear, and
try to learn the lesson and do the work, but
—not in your own strength, remember."

"Jeannie, if you'll give me the receipt I'll
try to make the pudding and a cake for
you," said Hattie, a few minutes later. It
was not particularly pleasant work for a hot
day, and especially for the fourth, when
everybody was "having a good time," as
Hattie kept thinking, but when she stepped
into the cool sitting-room and found the
tired mother asleep, with baby in her arms,
Hattie noted the sunken look of her sister's
face and was glad to think she had lifted
any of the burden from her shoulders.

"I say, mother, can you read to us? It's
too hot to be out of doors before tea-
time."

"I'll read, Tom," said Hattie quickly; and
though Johnny with a child's outspokenness
said, "Oh, no, mamma reads best," she
would not take offence, but laughingly said
she would improve by practice.

The boys leaned against her, and Dick,
hot as it was, insisted on sitting on her lap;
but she said nothing, only trying her best to
amuse, and finding, to her great astonish-
ment, that the afternoon was wonderfully
short and Tom was really quite entertain-
ing, telling them anecdotes about his school-
mates and reciting his last "piece."

After tea there was to be an exhibition of
fireworks, and, to her wonder, the boys in-
sisted that Aunt Hattie should go too. She
forgot to regret her loneliness and need of
girl friends as she laughed and joked with
the boys, and little Dick's pudgy hand
squeezed hers lovingly as they walked home
under the starlight. The boys declared she
was a "boss aunty"—their highest meed of
praise.

Days, weeks and months passed by. Ap-
parently little was changed in the Dallas
cottage. The boys romped and shouted as
before; Aunt Hattie was called here and
there even more than of old, but there was
always a pleasant word spoken in answer to
the call, always a smile and caress if a re-
quest had to be refused; and Hattie's life
was not so lonesome, either.

"Mr. Boyd's coming to-night, Aunt Hat,"
said Tom. "I told him you were just a
daisy hand to make sails and I know he's
making a splendid little boat for his brother—
I guess he wants you to hem the
sails."

Mr. and Mrs. Dallas exchanged glances.
"I suspect Mr. Boyd wants something be-
sides his sails, Will," said Mrs. Dallas to her
husband when they were alone.

"Shouldn't wonder! Well, you'll miss
Hattie; she certainly has done wonders with
the boys."

"Yes, indeed; Tom adores her, and even
Johnny, whose quick temper gets him in
trouble with everyone, is as much influenced
by Hattie as he is by me. How the girl has
improved since last summer! I remember
the very first time I noticed a change in her
—it was on the fourth. I had worried about
her moping as she used to do, but she went
out with the boys and came home as bright
and happy as she had made them."

In the parlor the same day was referred

to. "Do you know when I first saw you,
darling?"

"Certainly; at Mrs. Van Amburgh's; I
remember it very well," with a vivid blush.

"No, indeed; I might never have noticed
you there, for all girls seem alike to me at
such receptions; but last fourth of July I
saw three boys all gathered about a young
girl who was talking and laughing with them
as brightly as if she were entertaining young
gentlemen of her own age. I thought a girl
who could be so sweet and loving to her
own little brothers (as I took them to be)
was the kind of girl to win, and I watched
for a chance to be introduced to the light-
haired lassie, and—I have won her, thank
God!"

And so, the lesson learned, the work done,
Hattie's life was to change; but she left her
brother's home with a feeling of regret
tempering her joy in her new love, and when
troubles and jars come in her married life
she remembers the old lesson of her girl-
hood and says to herself, "Here is a lesson
to learn and a work to do, then I will be
moved; let me hasten to learn and do."—
Christian Union.

HARRY AND ARCHIE.

"Come on quick, Hal Strong! there's fun
ahead. You know Tom, the fisher? Well,
he's going out this afternoon, and he says if
we boys will promise not to bother, he'll
take us along. There'll be six of us, count-
ing you, if you'll hurry up and come. Say,
Hal, will you?"

Ned Green delivered himself of the above
with hardly a pause for breath; and then
wiping his warm face with a very moist
handkerchief, stood looking up at the win-
dow from which Harry was leaning, and im-
patiently awaited a reply. Harry, meanwhile,
had been considering.

"It'll be a jolly lark—no end of fun,
Ned," he said; "but, you see, there's part
of a load of wood to be piled in the back
yard, and I promised mother to do it sure
before dark."

"Cut the wood!" cried Ned, "it will keep
till to-morrow; and you never have time
for a frolic, seems to me. I say, Hal, it's a
confounded shame!" Harry laughed.

"Cut the wood, eh? That's been already
done, but not in the way you mean, old fel-
low. But hold on, I'll see what mother
says." And the bright young face disap-
peared from the window, while Ned waited
at the gate, anxious to be off, and yet too
loyal to his friend to leave him in the
lurch.

In a few minutes, however, Harry came
bounding from the doorway.

"It's all right, Ned; mother's good as pie.
She says the wood may wait, and so here I
am. Whoop! hurrah!"

Off they went, boy-fashion—leaping,
capering, and shouting; and as they go I'll
say a few words of Hal. It was seldom the
boy had a whole afternoon of play, although
he loved a frolic as well as his fellows. But
his widowed mother earned her living by her
needle, and Harry was obliged to seek such
odd jobs as would help her to fill the family
purse. So his hours of play were few and
far between, but perhaps all the more merry
and enjoyable when they came than would
otherwise have been the case. A thoroughly
good fellow was Harry Strong, and the boys
liked him well enough to include him in all
their sports whenever it was possible for him
to join them.

"I say, Ned Green," said he, as the two
went speedily on the road to the beach, "I'm
jolly glad for this afternoon of fun. I've
just been crazy for a boat-ride for ever so
long, and now here's the chance. I'm much
obliged, old fellow, for your thinking of
me."

"Guess we wouldn't like to go without
you, Hal," was Ned's answer, heartily given,
and just then the beach shone white and
broad before them, while out beyond danced
the rippling waters, inviting indeed to those
who were gathered there waiting until Tom
should dip the water out of his lumber-
ing old boat, and make her ready for pas-
sengers.

A cross old chap was Tom, the fisherman,
and not often would he allow himself to be
bothered by the boys. But once in a while
he gathered a few sunbeams within his heart,
and warmed a little to the usual entreaties
of the coaxing fellows who loved to haunt
the beach. So it had happened that on this
afternoon he had proven graciously inclined,
and ere long the boat was full of little fel-
lows ready and impatient for the "shove-