



The Family Circle.

ON HIS BLINDNESS.

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He, returning, chide—
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not
need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean, without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."

—John Milton.

THE FLUSH OF THE CHEEK.

BY MRS. M. A. DENISON.

"On New Year's day she was born and on a New Year's day she died."

The speaker's voice trembled. That bewildered look that so often crosses the face of the mourner passed over her countenance; then, casting her eyes heavenward for a moment, she commanded her grief, and shut it in her heart.

"I love to speak of it; I love to tell the story, painful as it is," murmured the speaker a few moments afterwards; "because it shows the exceeding graciousness of God, in rescuing a soul from the fearful pit into which I had fallen."

She was a fair and graceful woman dressed in mourning. Report said she had been very gay and beautiful.

"I was married very young," she continued, "to one I loved dearly. I shudder to tell you now, but it is true, we neither of us believed in the revealed Word of God. I had long thrown off what I called the shackles of a miserable theology, having imbibed infidel sentiments from my father, who loved the memory of Paine better than everything else, and annually celebrated his birthday. I married a rich man, whose tastes were like my own. We both of us loved music, poetry and painting, were both gay and devotedly wedded to pleasure. Prayer never entered our thoughts; we never spoke of the Heavenly Father, nor of his mercies, because we acknowledged nothing superior to dumb, visible nature. The stars, the sky, the beauties of sea and earth, were themes for our pens and our pencils; but to us they never spoke of God. The Sabbath was a day of selfish ease, a day on which we lounged, played music, and even cards, and received our friends, or else took our carriage and drove into the country.

"Two years after my marriage a dear little daughter was given to us. She was born, as I said, on New Year's day. It is, rather let me say it was my nature then, to love idolatrously. I worshipped my child, as I did my husband. I devoted all my energies to her; in fact, almost renounced the world, to live more absolutely in the light of my earthly though dazzling shrine, and knelt to the image within like a devotee night and day. I was laughed at, scolded, ridiculed; but nothing could tempt me from the side of my babe. Well, she repaid me. I had resolved that I would perfect the little outward casket, and show to the world a jewel at which they must wonder. I determined that in every point she should be beautiful. I consulted every science that would tend to the completion of my scheme. Her health was so precious in my sight that I scarcely rested, so assiduous were my exertions. I did not mean that she should be proud, vain or arrogant; but I, a human being, a poor, fallible mortal, was to crown the race with a perfect creature, outward and inward; the beauty of the body was to be but a faint reflection of the beauty of the soul. God, for a while, permitted my efforts to meet with seeming success. The child was angelic in form and feature. Her cheeks were soft and bright as rose-leaves; her brow was like a temple of ivory; her eyes were deep,

dark and lustrous, and her shape, unconfined, was grace itself. Seldom have I seen such faultless limbs, or hair with so rich a lustre. The first anniversary of her birthday came. I gave a corresponding entertainment. My babe was the idol of the glittering crowd, and my unholy vanity was satisfied. Gifts came pouring in, and many were the devices they bore. It was a strange mockery, and I tremble to remember how I accepted every homage: it was paid to my wisdom, my skill! In fine, I felt myself the creator of my child.

"The second year had nearly flown, and little Annette could walk and talk, and grew more and more wondrously lovely. One day I was called upon to visit a friend, supposed to be dying. I dared not trust any servant with the care of Annette. I could not take her with me, for the day was stormy; and I could not let her be near the taint of disease. In the mansion adjoining my own, there was a kind old nurse, who for thirty years had lived in one family. Could I possibly get the loan of her for an hour?

"She came at my request, and with many charges and much trembling, I left the little creature with her. I returned within the hour, and flew to the nursery. My child hung on the nurse's knee, her face upturned, her little hands clasped together. Her limbs had assumed a posture of inimitable grace, one tiny foot being in-locked within the other, and in her eyes was an expression that I saw for the first time. She sprang with a cry of joy towards me, while the old gray nurse left her seat as if to go. Suddenly the child glided out of my arms, and lifting one dimpled arm, throwing her beautiful head back, pointing her finger upward, she said, 'Mamma, Jesus! Jesus, mamma!'

"I grew cold; a shiver ran through every vein. I caught the child to my heart, and turning quickly, cried, 'What have you been teaching her?'

"I was only telling her, ma'am," said the old nurse, gently and respectfully, 'about her Saviour.'

"Putting such thoughts into the brain of a babe!" I exclaimed; "If I had dreamed of this, I would never have left her with you. My child is not intended for a fanatic; I am Saviour enough for her, at present."

"Terrible words! I had no sooner repeated them, than my heart sank within me like lead. The old nurse, with a look of pity, glided out of the room, and tortured with conflicting emotions, I burst into tears.

"The child put her hand upon mine, her lip quivering as it always did at any unusual sight, and as if asking a question, with her soft voice she said again, 'Jesus, mamma, Jesus!'

"No, no, no," I said sternly, for my soul was filled with a cruel hate. 'There is no Jesus, child,' I would have added, but I did not speak as I thought. I dared not, and I was angry with myself that I was such a coward. I had heard of such things, but my babe should love nothing beyond her parents. They were to be all in all—her life, love, heaven. From that day—from that hour—I was unhappy. A cloud settled upon me, which all my reasoning would not shake off. Every morning I flew to my child's crib, to assure myself that she was there; every night I awakened and listened in the hush for her small, sweet breathing. I was as it were unconsciously watching for the time—the terrible time—that came at last. It wanted only a week of the new year. I had been out purchasing beautiful presents for my darling, leaving her with my own mother, who had come to stay with me a while. I expected many callers, and was intending to finish an embroidered robe, on which I had been three months employed with my needle. It was for Annette—she would look so exquisitely lovely on that day. Who would not envy me the possession of such a child?

"As I returned home, I looked from my carriage up to the nursery window. My beloved one was there, her bright eyes beaming down upon me, her dear face all smiles. How she flew to welcome me, and to get the few little sweet-meats which I had purchased for her!

"Does she not look most beautiful, now?" I asked, triumphantly.

"Yes, only I don't quite like the flush on her right cheek," my mother replied.

"Flush—oh, that is nothing, I cried,

though a sudden fear took possession of me. 'She always has a lovely color.'

"And has she had that strange cough long?" my mother asked again.

"What strange cough?" I had heard nothing of the kind.

"Just then it sounded—one short, hollow cough, that I should hardly have observed if my mother had not called my attention to it. I looked anxiously at the child, who smiled in my face, and thus seemed to give me assurance that she was well. It was most singular, I have since thought, that I was not more alarmed. Before, the slightest indication of illness had startled me, giving me agony for the dread of coming sorrow. Now I seemed to feel so secure! to have such unlimited power over and absolute possession of my darling, that no dread troubled me.

"Twice in the night I heard that cough, and then I was alarmed. My husband sent immediately for the best medical aid; two physicians were summoned, and both looked strangely at my child. She was in my arms, and I was trying to smile away my own fears. Her eyes were unearthly brilliant, her cheeks unearthly red. But away down in my heart was a desperate, struggling feeling, as if I were fighting with some invisible power that called my child. I was, besides, mortified—yes, even then pride came up—that we were obliged to call in assistance, or rather, that a fear lest disease might be hovering near compelled us. My whole mind was absorbed in this feeling, when, looking up I chanced to see the physicians as their eyes met. I read there in an instant, by the electric force of intuition, what they dared not tell me—my Annette was very ill, perhaps dangerously so! Yes; that morning, as the pale beams mocked the dimness of my chamber, I first heard the fatal croup. No tongue can describe the utter anguish of my heart. I flew from room to room in search of aid, wildly and haggardly, and then returned to wring my hands helplessly over the sufferer. Many a mother's ear has caught the sound, so often the knell of death—that husky, frightful echo, as from some awful cavern of despair—the croup-rattle. I know not how I lived those succeeding days; my heart seemed frozen into stone; my soul, without knowing it, cursed the Author of my existence; my brain seemed burning lead; my eyes, hot, heavy and strained, refused to seek sleep or rest; and, until the last moment came, I would hold that dear head, would gaze upon that tortured face in speechless agony. She died in my arms.

When I knew that it was over, I threw myself upon the lounge, and there, refusing to move, speak, look, or take refreshment, I passed the ensuing day and night. In vain my husband stood over me distractedly; in vain he strove to comfort me. What comfort could he give? Was not her doom sealed? Could we carry the dead about in our bosoms? Was she not gone—gone eternally?

"Never, never, never to see her again!" Oh, that was intolerable anguish. The head that had lain in my bosom, that angelic head, to moulder away into dust; the limbs, the color, the intelligence—all gone, all gone forever!

"The second day was New Year's. In the early morning, reason resumed her sway. I lifted my head. All was dreary, dead silence. They had taken away Annette. I was alone. Oh, where had they carried her? As I arose languidly, I saw my husband sitting where he had sat, doubtless, all night, his face bloodless, his hands clasped tightly together, his eyes fastened sorrowfully upon me. The sight smote me to the heart. I flew to him, crying out only that he would help me bear it.

"Help me, help me, my husband! I have no other help," was my anguished entreaty.

"I cannot help you," was his gentle reply.

"Oh, my husband, if we had some refuge to go to!" I cried, passionately. 'If only we had something to hope in! But to think, to feel, that she has gone away from us—gone, never to come back—gone forever, and forever, and forever! Do you think, do you dare to think, that there might be some place where she is? Oh, no, no, no—it is impossible!'

"That day I was led, half fainting, to the room where they had laid her. Oh, my darling! she did not look dead. The

same beautiful outline, the brow as lovely, the hair as silken. Was it but these, animated by life, we had loved? I tried to take her to my heart, but the death-cold frightened me. I murmured, and rebelled, and wept wildly, when suddenly I heard a voice say, softly—

"Ah, blessed darling! how she listened when I told her of Jesus! Now she sees him."

"I turned suddenly upon the old, gray nurse, but her mild face and sad look of sympathy reproved me.

"He said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,'" she continued, softly. 'What a beautiful angel Annette is up there! O my dear madam, love him who has taken her, and you shall see her again—shall love her forever.'

"How my heart beat at these words! Emotion choked me. I could not but see that some holy light played over her features, that, plain and withered as they were, made them seem beautiful; and I exclaimed, trembling so that I could hardly stand, 'Oh, I wish, I wish that I could think so! Oh, I would that my babe was something more than dust and ashes! I would give worlds to feel that I might see her again!'

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