



The Family Circle.

PETTY PAINS.

BY SUSAN M. DAY.

The wintry twilight darkened; early night
The arches of the temple's roof made dim;
Slow gathering gloom, the dying sunset's
light,
Gave deeper meaning to the closing hymn.
Never had words so solemn seemed to
be—
"Ev'n though it be a cross that raiseth
me!"

"Ev'n though it be a cross?" my soul did ask
With searching meaning of herself, and low
I bowed my head. Yes, any cross or task
How hard soe'er it be, so that I go
Upon the heavenward road, and thus
may be
Raised nearer, Lord, to Thee, nearer to
Thee!

"Raised by a cross? Dost thou well under-
stand
What thou dost say?" insists my question-
ing soul;
"What if God takes thee at thy word? His
hand
Lies heavy sometimes; He exacts full toll
Of all our vows." And still in ecstasy,
I sang—A cross, so that it raiseth me!

Then with repeated prayer, fervent and low,
I homeward went, assured that God would
hold
Me earnest in my wish; some sudden blow
I wait for, thinking that like martyrs old,
I, too, could sing in death triumphant
song,
That sharpest pain would but make
weakness strong.

And thus I waited, and the days went by
Much as they always had done, and no
crown
Of martyrdom upon my head did lie;
No sudden grief or pain had struck me
down;
And I was disappointed—was no cross
Prepared for me, no shame, no weight,
no loss!

Not worthy ev'n to suffer! I must go
Stumbling through life's dull way; pray-
ing like one
Who feels that no one hears his prayer, and so
A long way off from God; a wintry sun
Of feeble faith upon my doubts to shine,
But joy in service, none, nor peace
divine.

As time dragged by, there came into my life
A petty pain, annoyance slight as when
Persistent insect wages puny strife,
And will not go, but comes and stings
again!
To human friendship it would be a
shame
To such a trifling grief to give a name!

It could but seem a needless, foolish pain—
There was no glory in it—naught sublime!
My patience could not bear the constant
strain,
It was a weary, wretched, sordid time!
At last, worn out, I thought in my de-
spair,
Perhaps this grief is not too small for
prayer.

And as I prayed, for the first time I felt
That some one listened; to my voice that
calls
An ear attends! The ice-bound doubtings
melt,
In my sore need, pride's stony barrier falls.
And thus my foolish pain has lifted me
A little nearer, Lord, I think, to Thee!
—Illustrated Christian Weekly.

THE DEACON'S TITHE.

BY ADA CARLETON.

They had a new minister at Seabrook.
Old Parson Thornleigh, who had kept the
flock for forty years, had gone to his long
home; and in his stead had come an honest,

plain-spoken young divine, with an earnest,
fearless eloquence of his own. And now
the worn door-stone of the little gray church
on the hill was once more trodden by feet
which had long been strangers to it. The
minister boarded, having no family, at Dea-
con Larrabee's.

"He's the least bit uncertain on some
points," said the deacon, leaning on his hoe-
handle and talking across the fence to his
neighbor Gray, who leaned on his hoe-
handle to listen—"a bit uncertain. But I
like him—I do, no mistake; and I believe
the Lord's going to bless us through him!"
"Amen!" was neighbor Gray's hearty re-
sponse.

They hoed a dozen hills of corn in silence,
their hoes keeping time to the merry song
of a bird in the orchard. Then Mr. Gray
paused to wipe the perspiration from his
face.

"This hot weather's liable to make sick-
ness," said he. "I suppose you've heard that
one of the Widow Sperry's boys is down with
a fever?"

"Sho! now you don't say so!" exclaimed
the deacon, commiseratingly. "Make it hard
for her, won't it?"

"Yes, particularly when she's so lately lost
her cow. I've been saying that we all ought
to take hold and make it up to her. If I'd
more than one cow on my place I wouldn't
stand to talk long, now, I tell you; but I
lost my two best ones last spring. If I
hadn't—"

It might have been unintentional, that
sudden facing about as Mr. Gray threw his
glance toward the hill pasture where his
neighbor's herd of cows was quietly feeding.
At all events, the deacon could scarcely help
noticing the action. And he understood its
purport. An uneasy flush mounted to his
face as he struck vigorously into the next
hill.

"She ought to have kept her cow out of
the road. My cattle never get into the mill-
pond and drown. If they should, I wouldn't
expect anybody to make 'em up to me. She'd
no more call, had the widow, to let
her cow run, than I'd have to turn my whole
drove out."

"It's a pretty hard case, nevertheless,"
said Mr. Gray.

And then the fragmentary conversation,
tossed piece-meal back and forth across the
fence as the neighbors went steadily on with
their work drifted into different channels.

There had been an interested listener to
the colloquy narrated above. On the shady
side of the wall which separated Deacon
Larrabee's orchard and cornfield sat book in
hand, the Rev. Mr. Weston. He arose, as
the chat which floated to his hearing began
to be of crops and haying, and walked
slowly away along the orchard path with a
thoughtful smile upon his face.

That night when the deacon took the
shining milkpails from the dresser and pro-
ceeded to the farm-yard, the young clergy-
man followed him. He stood leaning against
the bars, watching the yellow stars come out
in the sky, and looking abroad over the
deacon's possessions, shadowy now, but sub-
stantial enough by daylight.

"You are a prosperous man, deacon."
A smile of supreme satisfaction overspread
the deacon's countenance as he stood for a
moment patting the sleek neck of a favorite
cow.

"Well, yes," said he; "but I've made my-
self. A pig and a pitchfork, sir, was all I
had to begin with."

"How does your neighbor Gray get
along?"

"Gray? well, truth to tell, he'll never be
forehanded if he lives to the age of Methus-
elah. He's a hard-working man enough,
but why 'tis I can't tell you; there's never
a poor creature comes into our town that
doesn't head direct for John Gray's. Must
be instinct teaches 'em; for he gives to 'em
all deserving or not. I believe he'd take the
coat off his back if 'twas needed. He's a
good neighbor—a good neighbor; but he'll
never get anything, to speak of, ahead."

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in
heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth
corrupt, and where thieves do not break
through nor steal," quoted the minister.

"Yes, yes; but, if I mind me right, the
good Book says something too about provid-
ing first for one's own household—eh?"

Mr. Weston smiled. "I believe there is a
passage to that effect," said he.

"And," went on the deacon, a little tri-
umphantly, "if neighbor Gray would give a
certain portion—"

"A tithe?" interpolated the minister.

"And not go beyond that," continued
Deacon Larrabee, "he'd be better off in one
respect, and no worse off in the other, to my
thinking. I don't believe in—in indiscrimi-
nate giving."

"Nor do I," was the quiet rejoinder.
Then there was silence while Deacon
Larrabee filled another pail with snowy
foam.

"How many cows have you, deacon?"
"Ten," answered the deacon, with a par-
donable pride showing itself in voice and
feature; "and it's the finest herd in our
county. They're grade Jerseys."

"Yes," returned Mr. Weston, a little
absently. Then, after a slight pause, "Dea-
con Larrabee, I overheard the conversation
between you and your neighbor Gray this
morning, relating to Mrs. Sperry and her
misfortunes. Poor lady! she does need
substantial sympathy. Cannot you afford
to lend a tithe of your cows to the Lord?"

"Which means that I give one of them
to the widow," uttered the deacon, with a
wry face. "No, sir; I'm afraid I can't. She
wanted to buy one the other day, but I told
her I'd none to spare. It was all owing to
carelessness that she lost her cow, and I don't
believe in upholding improvidence. Get to
going on that way, and we'd all be on the
town farm before we knew it."

Mr. Weston wore a thoughtful counten-
ance, yet a gleam of something like amuse-
ment lighted up his eyes.

"Will you sell me one of your cows?" he
asked.

"I—I have no need of the money now,"
replied the deacon hesitatingly.

The minister continued: "I heard you say
this morning that you would be glad to give
a good man extra wages to help you through
your haying, but that you were afraid it
would be difficult to procure the needful as-
sistance at any price. Will you take me, and
let me pay for the cow in that way?"

A twinkle, both genial and quizzical,
dawned in the deacon's gray eyes. For a
moment he studied the young minister at-
tentively. He was not at all what his neigh-
bors would have denominated free-handed,
yet he had a just appreciation of the quality
of beneficence in other people. Neither was
he a hard man at heart. It was only that the
prosperity which had attended his every
undertaking caused him to look upon the
lack of it in a neighbor's affairs as an entirely
unnecessary evil—one which prudence and
forethought might overcome. Now he shook
his petitioner's hand heartily.

"It's a bargain," said he. "When will you
take the cow off my hands?"

"To-night, if you will lend me your as-
sistance," was the ready response.

"Better take one of those I haven't milk-
ed," said the deacon, with a smile, "and save
me that trouble."

Accordingly, a little time later, the min-
ister, accompanied by the deacon, led his re-
cent acquisition down the farm-house lane,
and away along the thoroughfare of the
sleepy little hamlet to the tiny cottage where
dwelt Mrs. Sperry and her brood. There
they fastened the animal to a convenient
post, rapped softly, and departed, with the
peaceful consciousness which attends upon a
worthy deed resting upon one of them, at
least, as a mantle.

Next morning when the deacon, hoe on
shoulder, was leaving his door-yard for his
corn-field, he encountered Mrs. Sperry.
Her eyes were red, as with long watching or
weeping, and her thin lips trembled with
the emotion which she vainly endeavored to
conceal.

She put out both hands to him. "Deacon
Larrabee," said she, "I have come to thank
you, and to ask your forgiveness. Oh, I
have had such hard thoughts of you!—how
cruelly hard only God knows—and my own
heart. Why, I almost came to pray that
some dreadful misfortune might overtake
you!—and all because you would not sell
me the cow you meant to give me."

"I—really—I—" began the deacon. The
situation was a most embarrassing one, and
rendered doubly so by the knowledge that
beside the open window of the room ap-
propriated to his library the minister was
sitting, no doubt enjoying the conversation
in the fullest measure. "Really, Mrs. Sperry
—I—"

"Now, don't try to deny it," laughed the
widow, a little nervously. "I know the
cow, Deacon Larrabee; and—" she laughed
again—"I am bowed down with contrition,
to think of my unjust feelings toward you.
But I shall always pray that you may prosper
hereafter, deacon; for I am sure you will

have a good account of your stewardship for
the Master."

The deacon mopped his scarlet face in sore
perplexity; How could he confess that the
gift was none of his? Yet there really
seemed no other way of escape from the
one-horned dilemma in which he found him-
self, unless—

Well, the widow's generous thanks were
very pleasant to hear; and after a moment-
ary deliberation the old deacon's good sense
and genuine manliness came to the fore.
He only wished that the happy thought had
been his, the charity his own spontaneous
deed.

"I am very glad if the gift pleases you,
Mrs. Sperry," said he, shaking her proffered
hand; "and now, please say no more about
it. Go into the house and see the woman.
I'll warrant she has a glass of jelly for the
sick boy."

To Mr. Weston later on he said with a
laugh, and a jocular twinkle in his eye, "I've
hired my man, and shall not need you; so
we'll shake hands and call it square. I think
that's what I meant to do all the while,
though I wasn't really sensible of it. But
I'll tell you one thing, Brother Weston, I
don't believe the next tithe will come so
hard."—S. S. Times.

THE ATHEIST'S TORN BIBLE.

BY MRS. ANNIE A. PRESTON.

John Moulton was the proprietor of a
"general" store in a small village in New
London county, Connecticut. He had the
reputation of being shrewd and close in all
his business transactions, and people who
knew him well said he had a peculiar
faculty for turning everything into good
solid money.

He was considered to be an honest man,
especially when he was obliged to be, but he
was an avowed Atheist, and regarded himself
as amenable to none other than human laws.
He despised the counsels and commands of
God, and ridiculed the Christian religion,
and its professors as well.

He would secretly open his store on the
Sabbath for the benefit of a godless, reckless
set among the villagers who met therein
behind the closed shutters to drink, smoke,
play cards and generally profane the Lord's
day. Consequently it was not surprising,
when his father died and left him, among
other things, a handsome family Bible, that
he should at once declare his intention of
using its sacred leaves as wrapping paper.

"In the first place," said he, "father made
a fool of himself in buying that old Bible,
and in the second place in giving it to me.
He gave ten dollars for it. It has never been
read—none of any consequence—and it isn't
of any account now surely in a literary or
religious way. I couldn't sell it in the lump
for more than a dollar if I should try, but it
will bring me in much more than that if I
retail it out by the ounce and pound. Its
thick heavy paper is just the thing to weigh
up for small and costly parcels."

"I don't believe I should dare to use the
old family Bible in that way, John," said his
wife. "It seems, somehow, as if it would be
wicked. Besides it would make talk among
to go-to-meeting folks, and some of them
are your customers, you know."

"Let the soft-headed hypocrites mind their
own business," snapped out John Moulton.
"Mine is the only store in these parts, and
they've got to trade with me," and this open
reviler of God's Word stripped off the hand-
some, substantial cover from the old family
keepsake, and putting the mass of heavy
leaves under his arm, strode across the street
to the store.

It did indeed "make talk" in every house
in town, when small parcels from John
Moulton's store were brought home wrapped
with the awful utterances of Jehovah and
the inspired words of Moses and the prophets.
But no one wanted to get into a useless and
unprofitable controversy with the man, so
many who felt shocked and aggrieved con-
sidered it the wisest policy to hold their
peace for the present, even when they ob-
served the sly winks which passed between
him and his godless associates when such
parcels were put up.

John Moulton was sadly disappointed.
He fully supposed that in sacrilegiously
using the Bible for wrapping paper he would
speedily provoke the expostulations and
censure of the minister and the deacons and
sundry devout women in the parish, and
thus have a fine opportunity to air his
infidel ideas that he had imbibed from his
various readings from Thomas Paine down