



The Family Circle.

A BLIND POET'S HYMN.

O Love! that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer fuller be.

O Light! that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy! that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross! that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

[The author of this beautiful hymn is Dr. Mathieson, of Edinburgh, who is totally blind. He is one of the most eloquent preachers in Scotland, and an author of no mean repute.]

BENNIE PUTTING HIS HANDS UP.

It was a soft, gray twilight all about the Potwin farm-house. Night was deepening.

"Hark, Mother!"
The farmer and his wife carefully listened.

"Sounds like a cry," said Mrs. Potwin.
"So it does," said Farmer Potwin, "but where is it? Oh, I know!"

He opened the cellar-door and thrust his head down into the shadows.

"I don't hear anything," he remarked.
"Oh, I know!" declared his wife.

She ran to the stairway leading up to the second floor and listened for any sound that might come down the stairway like a cascade descending from step to step.

"Nothing!" she said, shaking her head.
"Oh, I know!" said Farmer Potwin, triumphantly. "I have it now."

He went upstairs with something of the nimbleness of a boy's gait, and then ran his long, cane-like neck up the garret stairs.

"Nothing!" he muttered.
Not satisfied, he went up into the very garret-shadows. He poked along under the rafters, seeing and hearing nothing and saying "Nothing" twice, when suddenly he exclaimed, "Ow! There is something. An old nail I hit my head against!"

He laughed heartily, for Farmer Potwin had the reputation of being a "dreadfully good-natured man." Then he went downstairs and joined his wife.

"I thought, husband," said the farmer's wife, "that I heard the noise out-doors. And I am dreadfully worried. Do you know where Bennie is? Have you seen him?"

"Why no, I thought he went to the village."

"Yes, but he ought to have been back before this. Do you suppose—"

"Suppose what?"

"He can be making that noise?"

"Come out doors," said Farmer Potwin, seizing his old felt hat.

Bennie was very dear to the grandparents with whom he lived. The faintest suggestion that Bennie in any way might be the author of that strange outcry and might need their help was sufficient to alarm them seriously.

"There! It is in the barn. Hear it, wife?" cried Farmer Potwin, halting on the doorstep.

They ran to the barn. They opened the little red door in the south-eastern corner. They passed between the tall, bulging haystacks. They looked into the shadowy cattle-stalls. Farmer Potwin opened the door of a little tool-house, under the so-called "big west-mow," and then entered it. "Can't see a thing," he murmured. Baffled, he came out again.

"Oh, husband!" said Mrs. Potwin.
"There it is. In the small barn, I know."

They ran to an adjoining building, and

the moment they opened the door a full-sized boy's shriek was heard.

"The cistern!" gasped Farmer Potwin, moving forward cautiously, for it was quite dark in the small barn.

"Do—do—oh, look out—oh—oh—" ejaculated his wife. "Don't go too near!"

While this voice was cautioning the farmer, a pitiful voice from some unseen depth urged him forward. "Grandpa, I'm in the cistern."

"In the cistern," moaned his grandmother.

This was a cistern that was not a cistern. It was a cemented pit excavated years ago to hold water for any stock in his barn. The stock had gone and the water had been pumped out.

"Fill it up," said his wife.

"I shall want to put something in it sometime," the farmer repeatedly had told her.

"He had got his 'something' at last," now thought his wife, but she prudently smothered it and did not even say, "I told you so."

"Where are you, Bennie?" said the old man, crouching down by the mouth of the cistern.

"Here, here! I can't see you."

"Well, don't worry, I'm here just the same. You can hear me."

Here the farmer reached his hands down into the cistern while he lay flat upon the floor.

"Now, Bennie, where are you? Put your hands up."

"But I can't see your hands."

"No matter. The hands are down where you are, though you can't see them. Feel round after them."

Soon the farmer's big warm hand felt the touch of something cold and small.

"There, there," he said, soothingly.

"Now let me get a good firm hold. There for ye. Now—up—up—up. Here you are! Up like Joseph out of his pit, only you've got among friends."

"Bless his heart," said his grandmother, springing forward. "Where is he?"

"Look out, Keziah," said grandpa, administering complacently a caution in his turn. "Look out, or you will go down next, and I shall have you to draw out."

"Bless his heart, I don't care if I do get in now he is out," said the grandmother, hugging Bennie and almost smothering him in her embrace.

"I—thank—you ever so much—I didn't mean to get there, but I came—for—some of—my things, and the floor gave way," explained Bennie.

He kept various pieces of boy-property in this part of the small barn, and visiting them he had unintentionally got into trouble.

"I'll fill that hole up to-morrow," said the farmer.

"Good," said the farmer's wife, but to herself, not aloud.

This affair made a deep impression on Bennie's mind. Sometimes he would imagine that he was Joseph in the Bible pit of old, and that grandpa would come and rescue him from Joseph's brethren.

Then again he was only Bennie in the barn-cistern, and he could feel the firm, strong while kindly grasp of his grandfather's hands. It used to interest and divert his thoughts if anything troubled him.

By and by came a use of the adventure that he could little have anticipated. There was in many homes in that community, one day, an interest in the things that are better and lasting and heavenly. There were frequent services in the church. The bell up in the tall gray tower often called the people to the House of God. It was said of this one and then of that one that they were seeking the Saviour. Then it would be told of some one that they had "found a hope." All this deeply impressed Bennie.

"I—I—would like to be a Christian," he often thought, "if—if I only knew how."

He prayed earnestly as it seemed to him, but he did not come into peace.

His grandfather noticed it. "Bennie, dear," he said.

"What, sir?"

"You don't make much headway in your praying, do you?"

"No, sir; it is all dark above me. I don't seem to get near God."

"Well, let me tell you something: 'Do

you remember when you got into the cistern?"

"Yes, sir."

"I put my hands down and I told you to put your hands up, but you said you could not see my hands. I told you not to mind that, only to put your hands up, and didn't I get hold of them?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Well, why don't you put your hands up and trust God, the same way you did me? He has got his hands down all the time, you may be sure of that. You trust him. You leave it all to him."

Bennie said nothing more then. He went away.

He went back that very day. A smile was on his face. "Grandpa," he whispered, "I put my hands up and trusted and God has got hold of them now."—*Watchman.*

HOW ALICE STOOD THE TEST.

Things always went very quietly in the little Derbyshire village of Anchorchurch. This was partly because it was hardly big enough to make a bustle, just a half-dozen cottages, the squire's hall, and those two places to be found everywhere—the public house and the blacksmith's forge. Then beside it, under its high banks with their green ferns and whispering leaves above, the river Trent slowly swept by, hardly making a sound among the rushes, until a mile away it tumbled over the stones of the weir.

In the cottage near the dell lived Alice, a bright lass of about twelve summers, with a ringing laugh and nimble feet, the very pet of her father the blacksmith, "the apple of his eye," as he used to call her. When on Sunday the good man put on a frock coat and a black top hat to take his turn as local preacher at the villages near, Alice often went with him, and had many a good high time on the road. Two things the sturdy blacksmith used to impress on the mind of his little daughter. "My lass," he would say, "serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and be a brave teetotaller."

One morning Alice came running up to the forge with a letter in her hand, and in high spirits. "Look, father, a letter from auntie in London, and they want me to go and spend a holiday with them! Isn't it grand?"

Her father stooped down and gave her a kiss, and told her she should go, much as he would miss her. She ran back with joy to tell her mother.

"Bless the child, I don't like to refuse; they're rich folk there, and maybe will be good to her, and might not forget her even when I'm gone."

Who can tell the excitement of those next three days? The bits of sewing and ironing mother had to do, the packing of the wonderful box which father carried on his shoulder all the way to the station, the bidding good-bye, not without tears, all round, the last injunctions and blessings; and then Alice, all by herself, with her ticket carefully pinned to her dress in front, was on her way. She wiped her eyes soon and the sorrow of leaving her parents gave place to the wonder and anticipation of what she should see in London.

"I wonder whether I shall like auntie and uncle? I must not forget what father said, 'If they're not teetotallers, Alice, stand firm, my lass.' Yes, I'll stand firm."

Then she reached King's Cross, and soon was in the cab with her auntie, who seemed very kind. Little Alice, though a bit tired with her journey, was almost too excited to talk. That evening she made acquaintance with her uncle, a rather rosy-faced, loud-speaking man, who prided himself on being good-hearted, but always having his own way. That night when Alice got to her little bedroom she felt just a little scrap lonely to think of her dear father and mother being so far away, but after her prayers, filled with recollections of them, she fell asleep. Next day, when out in the wonderful London streets, looking at the fine shops, her auntie said something to her.

"How do you like your uncle, my dear?"

"Very much, auntie, thank you."

"Now, listen, Alice; he wants to be very kind to you, and you must not be surprised if he takes you out and buys you nice things too. You see we have no children of our own."

"Oh, auntie, that is good of him; I will do all I can to please him, and show him I am grateful."

"That's right; the next Sunday—it's only once a week we have it—he will ask you to have a glass of wine. Of course, you won't say 'no,' will you?"

Little Alice's face fell, but she mustered up courage to say, "Auntie, you know I wear the blue ribbon, and never touch anything of that sort."

"Oh, nonsense, child, just for once I'm sure you might."

Sunday came. Poor little lass, with what misgivings she looked forward to dinner time! But she had asked God to help her, and her text that morning was "I am with thee;" so why should she fear.

"Here, Alice, take a glass of wine, dear."

"No, uncle, thank you, I'm a teetotaller, you know."

Uncle was astounded and angry. First, however, he tried by kind words to move her resolution, told her it would do her good ("poor child, you can't get such good stuff at home I know"); then, growing vexed, he told her plainly that if she was so obstinate she might go home again to-morrow, he had never been so rudely treated by a child before. She cried bitterly, her little heart was so full; but for all that she was brave, and stuck to her colors like a true soldier of Jesus Christ.

Later on in the afternoon, her aunt, who was a little afraid of offending her husband, found her little guest sitting in her room, and began to upbraid her.

"Well, you've done for yourself now, Alice. Your uncle is quite put out, and says it is no good trying to be kind to such as you. You will have to go back to-morrow."

What a blow this was to Alice! To lose all the sights, to go home disgraced—nay, not disgraced, for she knew those dear ones at home would tell her she had done right. So with tears she could not keep back, she tied up her box again, looking regretfully at the clean clothes and fresh trimmed dresses which her mother had prepared for her, all to go back unused, but "I will be with thee," was her text, and she felt it true.

Her uncle said good-bye to her at breakfast with just a tinge of tenderness in his voice, he had slept off his temper, and an hour afterwards when they were just ready to go to the station, to the astonishment of both, he came back from the city.

"Has Alice gone, dear?"

"No, George, we were just off though."

"Then tell her she shall stay. Where is she?"

Alice came forward, half afraid something else had happened.

"Look here, child, you are a plucky little girl for sticking to your principles, and I am very sorry I pressed you to take that wine. Take your things off dear, and you shall stay as long as you like, for something tells me that after all you are right and I am wrong."

What could Alice do but give her uncle a big kiss, and (would you believe it) all the time Alice was there the wine and beer were kept off the table, and when the last morning did come, and she really had to say "good-bye," what do you think he said to her?

"Good-bye, Alice, give my love at home. What do you think your auntie and I said to each other last night? Why, we said that, having done so long without it, we would not drink any more of that which you would not take, and we have to thank you, my lassie, for that good resolution."

Don't you think Alice had a nice journey home? Can't you just imagine how her father and mother kissed the maid again and again, when in her cottage home she told them all about it?

Girls and boys! like Alice, stand the test.

—*Band of Hope Review.*

Oh, that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end!

DEUT. 32: 29.