



### The Family Circle.

#### WINGED WORDS.

If words  
Were birds,  
And swiftly flew  
From tips  
To lips  
Owned, dear, by you;  
Would they,  
To-day,  
Be hawks and crows?  
Or blue,  
And true,  
And sweet? Who knows?

Let's play  
To-day  
We choose the best;  
Birds blue  
And true.  
With dove-like breast!  
'Tis queer,  
My dear,  
We never knew  
That words,  
Like birds,  
Had wings and flew!

#### GIFTS AND BURDENS.

BY MISS M. E. WINSLOW.

"Bless you, Annie, my child! It does my old heart good to see you once more, or at least to hear your sweet voice; for the seeing, these dim eyes must wait God's touch of opening. It is a long time since your presence has brightened my little dark room."

There was no undertone of sadness in the cheery voice which spoke these words. The room was dark and small and plainly furnished, though beautifully neat. The fact was recognized, that was all. The thin figure lay with folded hands upon a low couch, her hair once raven black, but now slightly rippled with silver, smoothly braided across a brow whose wonderful calmness was a revelation, but above eyes from whose wandering restlessness the soul of sight had gone forever. Such was Aunt Polly; stranded, as so many waifs from foreign lands are, in a third-rate boarding-house on the wrong—because unfashionable—side of the great city.

I need not describe Annie. Velvet, silk, feathers, diamonds, furs, lace, the ordinary make-up of a young American matron, encased a form blooming with health and good looks. A mouth of real sweetness was there, and eyes whose light showed that earth was not quite all to the spirit which dwelt within the carefully-arrayed form; and yet the whole was overshadowed with an expression of weariness and discontent. Perhaps a greater contrast could not be found than that existing between the visitor and her hostess, as the latter settled herself for a long morning's talk.

"Aunt—I may still call you by the old Riverton name, may I not? Now that I am so far away from everybody who used to love me, it is nice to call some one by home names. Aunt, I should have been to see you long ago, only I have been so busy since we came to town. Such a time as Harold and I have had in getting the house furnished. It is a lovely house. I shall send the carriage for you to come and see it some day soon; though, to be sure," she added tenderly, "your poor old eyes can't see much. But, oh! the weary days I have spent in going from store to store, choosing rugs and furniture, and weighing the relative merits of moquette and Axminster. The way tradespeople disappoint and misunderstand you, is perfectly exasperating. The drawing-room mirror was set up in the sitting-room; the book-cases found their way into the dining-room, Louis Quatorze suits were sent instead of Queen Anne, and the most incongruous arrangements were made in the very face of my most explicit orders. I told Harold he would have a gray-headed wife if it went on much longer."

"But it's all complete now?" said Aunt Polly inquiringly.

"Yes, it's all in beautiful order now, I'm happy to say. But I live in a perfect state of worry for fear something will happen to the costly things. It's a great responsibility," said the young housekeeper with a sigh, "to

have the charge of a great house full of mirrors and statues, silver and glass, pictures and elegant furniture and to know that five or six wild Irish men and women are roaming among them, and that you may wake up some morning to find the whole thing in chaos. And those dreadful servants! You can't fancy what a time we have had with them; some we didn't like, some didn't like us. I don't know how Harold managed it, but he did not seem to have half so much trouble in getting the coachman and butler as I did in getting the girls. It is a worry, too, to have the charge of so many servants. They seem to be running over each other's heels, and sometimes I can't get one of them to do what I want done, because it is some one else's work, and they can't settle which."

A deep sigh followed this summing up of miseries, and Aunt Polly sighed too, in spite of her habitual smile, as she said:—

"Annie, the mountain purple always fades as we near it and find only prosaic rocks and trees. I remember a little minister's daughter at Riverton who said it was her 'highest ambition to have servants enough to do the housework and wait upon all those tiresome ministers who were forever bringing their families to tea.' What other mountains of trouble have piled themselves upon my pet?"

"Don't laugh at me, Aunt, please don't. It was a great bother to get my winter wardrobe ready, and took up so much time—that I wanted to spend with Harold, too. I went to Stewart's and Arnold's and Stearns' dozens of times, and I had no end of trouble in matching trimmings and harmonizing colors. Madame Dumouriaux made all sorts of mistakes in fitting me; I had to send back my dresses half a dozen times. Harold was very particular that his little country wife should look just as well as any of his city friends, so I felt bound to take great pains to suit his taste. It was well I got all ready; for we have been in such a round of society ever since we were settled, that I have needed every one of my things and have never had a moment to attend to them."

"Do you enjoy this kind of society very much, dear?"

"No, Aunt. In Harold's position it's a necessity, I suppose, but I can't honestly say that I enjoy it. Just at first I liked the glitter and music and compliments, but now it is very burdensome to have to spend so much time in dressing to receive 'stupid' people who when they call would be glad to find you out so they could leave cards, and to visit them in the same enthusiastic manner. It's a regular bore to give up whatever you are interested in and go to parties where people only invite you because they must. I am tired of dining and giving dinners, of standing in crowded show-rooms to criticize people's dress and furniture, and listening to classical music which I know I ought to admire, but don't."

"Don't you enjoy anything at your parties?"

"It makes me very glad to see how much Harold is appreciated. When I see all those grave, learned men listening deferentially to his conversation, speaking with such admiration of his books, and predicting for him such a brilliant career, I can hardly believe in my own good fortune. And yet," with a deeper sigh, "Harold don't look to me well. I am afraid he studies too much and spends too much time at his desk. O Aunt, what would all the books and fame be to me if Harold were to die, or, worse, become insane? Or if—if I have terrible forebodings sometimes. Suppose the company into which his literary life brings him, should lead him astray, and he should drink, or gamble, or—it drives me wild to think of it."

"I don't think you have any ground or occasion for such dreadful thoughts, dear. I would trust the tried principles of your Harold anywhere; but you have told me nothing of my little favorite Lillias."

"Lily is the dearest, sweetest little angel that ever came into any one's house; but you don't know little Harold, my baby boy, at all. He'll be a year old to-morrow. I'd have brought him with me to-day, only I was afraid he was going to have the croup last night. I always am in agonies for fear either of the children will take something. There is always so much measles and whooping cough and scarlet fever going about, you know. I can't bear to drive near a cemetery and look at the little graves there. I tremble whenever I think of how I am to answer for those precious little bodies and

immortal souls committed to my care. Suppose I should not bring them up right; suppose some mistake of mine should destroy them for time and eternity?"

A sob closed this sentence, and there was a long silence while Aunt Polly silently prayed for wisdom to show her young friend where to cast her care.

"Annie," she said gently, "the little girl I used to know gave her heart to her Saviour and solemnly promised to live to His glory. I have heard nothing about Him to-day. Have you ceased to aim for that higher, inner life?"

A bright blush suffused the face now hidden in the delicately gloved hands, as its owner said, "No, I haven't quite given it up, but everything seems against me here. At Riverton it was so different. I had nothing else in those old days, and the Lord seemed very near and dear. But now my thoughts are full of other things; dress, property, company, servants, husband, children, all seem like thick clouds to shut out His presence. The weight of my cares and responsibilities presses upon me at prayer-time, and even in church my attention is distracted by the artistic music, the glowing colors, and the eloquent sermons. After all, the greatest of my burdens is the fear lest among this multiplicity of 'weights' I should not run the race set before me, and so lose the goal at last."

"Poor little soul," said Aunt Polly, soothingly; "read me from my little black Bible there the verse you will find marked with red ink. I could almost see it with my poor blind eyes."

And Annie read: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." The sweet words were hardly finished when a knock at the door announced that Annie's carriage was in waiting, and she sprang up, glad, perhaps, to bring to a close a conversation which was becoming so very personal. As she did so she remarked that the torment of having one's own carriage was that neither horses nor coachman could be kept waiting a moment, and promised to come soon and pay her old friend another visit. But as she was rapidly driven toward her luxurious home, her thoughts were busy with the latter part of the recent conversation, and she puzzled greatly over the apparently unsolvable problem of the seraphic peace which sat upon Aunt Polly's brow.

It was many weeks before Annie again found leisure and opportunity to visit her old friend's humble room, but when, at length, she did, a glow of choice fruit and the fragrance of hot-house flowers came in with her, bringing to the blind occupant a sweet consciousness of outside life. All within the room was unchanged, unless it was that the pallor of Aunt Polly's face was a shade deeper, and a few more silver threads rippled through her hair. The little Bible lying where it had lain for many months, suggested the close of the last conversation, and Annie said abruptly:—

"Aunt Polly, I am ashamed of the selfishness I displayed when I was here the last time in pouring out my list of grievances upon one so heavily burdened as you have been and are."

"No, no, my child! I bear no burdens. I cast all mine on the Lord, years and years ago, and He has sustained me ever since, as He promised He would. I have been thinking it might help you to hear of some of the gifts which have been showered upon me."

"Oh, do tell me, Aunt. I have often longed to hear something about your early life."

"First, read that Bible verse for me again, and as you do so, look at the margin and see what you can find."

"Why, the word 'burdens' is translated 'gifts' in the margin, and it reads, 'Cast thy gifts on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee,' as though it needed divine strength to support gifts. How strange! Is that the right translation?"

"I believe the two words are allowed by the best scholars, even among the Revisers, to equally express the meaning of the original. And now I will tell you of some of my 'gifts.' Very choice and precious gifts they are, Annie, for they were chosen by the love of my Heavenly Father and presented by the wounded hand which was stretched out upon Calvary for me. First came the gift of bereavement. I had not reached the age of womanhood when death swept through our English home, and in successive strokes carried off father, mother, brother, and sister,

till I stood alone in the world. Nor did he finish his work on that side of the water, for having married and come to this country in the course of a few years, I followed to yonder lonely cemetery three lovely little ones, and him who was all the tie which bound me to a strange country and a lonely world. Of course the gifts of care and anxiety were accompaniments of that of bereavement, but they were all blessed and welcome, for they drove me closer to Him who is 'our strength' and is 'made unto us wisdom,' and who is, moreover, 'a father to the fatherless, a husband to the widow,' and more than 'sons to her that is left desolate.' 'As one whom his mother comforteth' have I lain for years clasped in His arms and folded to his heart. Earth affords no happier resting-place."

"Oh Aunt Polly!" said Annie with streaming eyes, "surely these burdens were enough."

"My next gift," said her friend, "was poverty, with its bitter accessories of mortification and dependence, and thus was I taught humility and to live by faith, finding it a key to inexhaustible treasures. It is sweet to take one's daily bread directly from the Father's hand, not knowing how the next meal will be provided, but sure, nevertheless, that it will be there."

"Hard work was another good gift—brain work and body work; work which prevented repining thought, making sleep sweet and homely fare palatable, at the same time giving me a sweet sense of fellowship with Him who came 'that He might work the works of God.' But the choicest gifts of all were sickness and infirmity; eyes that closed on outward objects, 'saw Jesus only,' and outward man that perished daily while the inward man was renewed day by day; days of utter prostration and nights of speechless agony, on which has dawned the glorious morning certainty that 'though flesh and heart fail, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.' Annie, I grow garrulous when I speak of the many gifts of my Heavenly Father; I must stop before I tire you out."

"Aunt Polly, Aunt Polly," sobbed Annie, "what is the vast difference between you and me?"

"Only this, dearest. God has showered upon your young life His choicest, most beautiful gifts—wealth, luxury, talent, health, beauty, friends, a noble husband and lovely children. But you have turned them into burdens by endeavoring to bear the care and responsibility of them yourself. On me He has laid what the world would call very heavy burdens, but I have cast them on him by an unflinching trust, and He has transmuted them into precious gifts of His tender love. Reverse your process, dear. Cast your burdens on the Lord really and trustfully, for He has promised to sustain you; to bear their responsibility for you, and to teach you how to use them for His honor. You shall once more find them to be gifts, all the brighter and sweeter for His sanctifying love, and because with them comes that highest of all gifts which can never in any sense become a burden—the gift of His dear Son. This is the alchemy which neutralizes the poison of earthly prosperity, and overcomes its deadening influence upon our spiritual life, which prevents our gifts from becoming burdens, and turns our burdens into gifts."—*Zion's Herald.*

#### THE BROKEN BLOOD-VESSEL.

There was a young lady visiting in London, and while in a shop she suddenly broke a blood-vessel. She was gently removed to a private house, laid on a sofa, and had brandy administered to her. A medical man was summoned, and when he came into the room and felt her pulse, her friends told him they had given her brandy, as though they had done the right thing.

"Brandy!" exclaimed he, "you could not have done a worse thing. Send for some ice. So ice, not brandy, was needful. The lady was not given any more alcohol, and found ice both safer and better. In cases of bleeding, beware of brandy. Try what ice will do."—*Union Signal.*

There is no lack of kindness,

In this world of ours;

Only in our blindness

We gather thorns for flowers.

—Gerald Massey.