



The Family Circle.

THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT.

In a napkin smooth and white,
Hidden from all mortal sight,
My one talent lies to-night.

Mine to hoard, mine to use,
Mine to keep, or mine to lose,
May I not do what I choose?

Ah! the gift was only lent,
With the Giver's known intent
That it should be wisely spent.

And I know he will demand
Every farthing at my hand,
When I in his presence stand.

What will be my grief and shame
When I hear my humble name,
And can not repay his claim!

One poor talent—nothing more!
All the years that have gone o'er
Have not added to the store.

Some will double what they hold.
Others add to it ten-fold,
And pay back the shining gold.

Would that I had toiled like them!
All my sloth I now condemn:
Guilty fears my soul o'erwhelm.

Lord, O teach me what to do,
Make me faithful, make me true,
And the sacred trust renew!

Help me, ere too late it be,
Something yet to do for thee—
Thou who hast done all for me!

—Kate B. W. Burnes.

THE CROSS-ROADS.

"Which road do we take, grandpapa?" inquired Harry, as grandfather's little black mare and Harry's pretty little pony trotted slowly, side by side, up towards the cross-roads.

"Whichever roads you would like the best," replied grandpapa, carelessly. Harry turned and looked at him, it was such an odd reply; but the face gave no more information than his answer had done.

"You are joking, grandpapa, I know you are," said Harry, laughing.

"Joking! I am very serious," replied grandfather.

"But, grandpapa, we want to go to Cresson."

"So we do. Your cousins will be pleased to see you, Harry."

Harry found that his grandfather said no more about the road, so he waited a minute until they came to the point where the question must be decided.

Grandpapa drew up his reins and quite stopped his little mare, and Harry wondered very much what he meant to do, coming to a full stop just at the point where the two roads crossed each other.

"Do you forget which road to take grandpapa?"

"No, indeed! I have trotted over them both too often to forget about them."

"Then which shall we take, grandpapa?"

"The one you like best, boy."

Harry was perplexed. Grandfather seemed so earnest in saying such a silly thing.

"I don't care which road we take, grandpapa, only I want to go to Cresson."

"You want to go to Cresson, of course, but it is strange that you do not decide which you like the appearance of the best; one, you notice, is much smoother and easier travelled than the other."

"Grandpapa, I am sure they cannot both go to Cresson."

"Oh no, nobody said they did, boy; but what does that matter?"

Harry was greatly disturbed; he thought something must be the matter with his grandfather, or that he was very provoking.

"We cannot get to Cresson, grandpapa, if we take the wrong road," he replied, a

little impatiently; "how can it matter about my liking the road?"

"It matters a great deal. One road is uphill and down all the way for miles, and leads over a stream which we would be obliged to ford; the other is smoother, easier; which do you think you would prefer?"

"But, grandpapa, we will have to take the right one, no matter what kind of a one it is."

"Why, my dear boy, your words are contrary to the actions of the greater part of the people of the world; how do you happen to speak so unreasonably?"

Harry's little "Midge" was getting somewhat fussy, and wanted to go; Harry looked perplexed as he tried to make Midge stand still.

"I do not know, grandpapa; but do let us go," he pleaded.

"Yes, it is hard to stand still, ponies, horses, boys, men, women, time—all like to go, and do go, but the great point to decide is where to and how to get there."

"Grandpapa, you are too funny for anything," said Harry, more and more bewildered; "we decide to go to Cresson, and now the thing to do is to go, isn't it?"

"Yes, but how?—that is the question."

"By the road which leads there, grandpapa, for you know yourself if we take the wrong road we shall never, never reach Cresson, if we even ride for a year."

"Do you really mean that, boy?" inquired grandpapa, solemnly; "do you mean to say that it is so important about the road?"

Harry did not like to laugh at his grandfather, but he did do it; how could he help it?

"Why, grandpapa," he said, as he patted little Midge, and try to make him stand as still as "Jet" was doing, "it is just as important to get on the right road as it is to start at all; don't you think so?"

"To be sure I do," said grandfather, with a sudden earnestness; "I see that you agree with me, so will not consider which road is the easier, or more agreeable, but take the one leading to Cresson, which is this to the right. But stay a minute: Midge must wait. Did you think your grandpapa had lost his senses?"

"No, grandpapa, not just that," said Harry, patting Midge, and feeling relieved that they had succeeded in so far coming to reason.

"Boy," said grandpapa, holding Midge's bridle to make him stand quite still and just where he could look in Harry's puzzled eyes, "you are standing at two cross-roads instead of one. Do you know what I mean?"

"No, grandpapa, I cannot think."

"These roads lead to the north, south, east, and west; the eyes can see them; the other cross-roads lead to God and away from Him; there are only two of them."

Harry was a little puzzled yet.

"If I should ask you which you would choose, the good or evil road—the road to God or away from him—I know what you would answer me; you would not wait to consider a minute; you would choose the good, and that would be well as far as it went; but thousands have chosen the good and have come out at the evil end. Thousands have said they choose to travel towards God, but have found themselves afterwards with their backs to Him, at the very end of the wrong road. They never started towards God, or walked on the good way at all. The reason was that they never stopped at the cross-roads and considered properly what road to take. Their mouth said, 'I wish to go on the good road which leads towards God,' but they did not stop and question, and find how to get on the good road. They were contented with thinking that they wanted to go towards God, but did not begin to go. If you are going to Cresson, you must take the road to Cresson, and keep on it, no matter how rough, steep, slippery, crooked, or vexatious in every way it may be. If you want to go towards God, you must take the road leading towards God, no matter how hard, disagreeable, or trying it may prove to be."

"I never thought about its being like two roads," said Harry, forgetting how funny it was of grandpapa to stop Midge and Jet in the middle of the road to talk in such a puzzling fashion.

"Boy, you are young; that means you are coming to the cross-roads. Look out! Do not say, 'I want to go to Cresson,' and set your face towards Munford. Decide

for God or against Him; I pray it may be the former; and get on the right road. Get on it; keep on it; stay on it; walk over it—up hill or down hill."

"Grandpapa, you puzzled me very much at first."

"Yes, boy," said grandpapa, dropping Midge's bridle and letting both him and Jet start at an easy pace, "I suppose so; but I want you to get these cross-roads, and the importance of deciding about them, fixed in your mind so that you will never forget them, that they may always come back as though they were before your eyes, reminding you of those other cross-roads of which I have been speaking. When you think of going to Cresson, remember the importance of deciding about the road and keeping on it. When you think of these cross-roads, remember, too, these other cross-roads of good and evil; for, boy, you can no more reach heaven by the wrong road than you can get to Cresson by going towards Munford."—George Kingle in *Band of Hope Review*.

OUR HOSPITAL PET.

BY ELLEN BERTHA BRADLEY.

There was a crush on Broadway, a jostling of waggons, and a shouting of drivers. Then a sharp shriek. No one knew how it had happened, but a child was under the wheels.

"A street Arab," somebody said, as kind hands lifted the unconscious form and laid it in an ambulance. Then the busy tide surged on.

When the boy opened his eyes he was lying on a little cot in a room where there were many such beds. The walls were white and hung with pictures, and the sunshine streaming in through the long windows, filled the ward with brightness.

At first he thought he was dreaming, and closed his eyes in languid contentment. But gradually he became conscious of strange sensations. He tried to move but could not. It seemed as if he were tied fast. Just as he was beginning to realize this, a pleasant voice asked:

"Wouldn't you like a drink?"

Looking up he saw a young woman standing by his bed, with a cup of milk in her hand. She was small and wore a dainty cap perched on the dark curls which clustered on her forehead. She looked very pretty to him, and for a moment he thought she was part of his dream, but he was thirsty, and milk was an unwonted luxury. Drinking it roused him more, and as he gave her back the cup he asked:

"Where am I? Why can't I get up?"

"You have been hurt, and must lie still a while. You are where you will be taken care of," she answered evasively.

She knew, too well, the horror which many of the poor feel for hospitals to speak the word till he became accustomed to the thing.

"It is nice here, and you are good," he said, gratefully as she shook up his pillow.

"Can I stay here till I get well?"

"Would you like to?" she asked, knowing that there was no getting well for him.

"Yes: I have no where else to go," he answered.

This, and the fact that his name was Chris, was all she ever learned about him. If he had a history he did not tell it. Apparently he had always been as then, without father, mother or other claimant.

Miss Morgan, the nurse, soon grew fond of him, for there was something strangely attractive about the silent child. Whether patient endurance was part of his nature, or was a result of early hardships, or a benumbing effect of his injuries, it was impossible to tell. But he lay quiet and seemingly happy, watching the frolics of the other children, who were most of them able to be up and about, at least part of the day.

They, too, grew fond of him, and shared with him their toys and games. Indeed, one of the many beautiful things to be seen in a hospital is the kind and gentle sympathy of the patients for each other, and the way they share their few pleasures and luxuries. The generosity of the rich is nothing to that of the poor, for the former give out of abundance, the latter out of poverty.

"What makes you so happy here?" Miss Morgan once asked him.

"It is warm, and I have enough to eat, and you are good to me," he answered, caressing the hand he held.

Accustomed though she was to dealing with misery and suffering, the answer startled her. Had the struggle for existence been so terrible to this gentle boy, that to be warmed and fed were luxuries to be rejoiced over, even though purchased by pain and confinement? Were love and tenderness so unknown to him that he was grateful for that of a hospital nurse? Yet, if she had but known, it was not strange that any one should enjoy her care, for she, like most women who devote their lives to the relief of suffering, brought to her work a heart made tender by sorrow, and ministered for love of ministering, not as a hireling.

His ignorance was no less remarkable than his quietness. It seemed as if there must be something lacking about him mentally, that he had picked up so little in his street life. He knew the name of the city in which he lived, but not of the State. He had heard of schools, but could not tell what was done there. Sunday was to him merely a day when people stopped work and it was harder than ever to get food, and when people who had good clothes went to church. He had heard the names of God and Christ in oaths, but knew no more of the Christian religion than if he had lived upon the steppes of Asia. Honesty and truthfulness were to him luxuries of wealth. Stealing and lying incidents of poverty. It is a strange comment upon our civilization that such heathenism can exist in our midst.

Miss Morgan was to have an experience rare in this land. She was to teach this boy with his oddly mature and immature mind, those truths of Christianity which are familiar to most children, when scarcely out of the cradle, and to see how the old, old story would seem to one to whom it was altogether new. Religious teaching was no part of her recognized duties, but she was too truly a servant of her Master, to let such an opportunity slip.

Little by little, as the chance offered, she told him the story, beginning with the angels' song and the childhood of our Lord. Most children would have asked questions, but Chris rarely did. He listened as if to a fairy tale. But when she told him of Jesus healing the sick, he started with eager interest.

"Where is He?" he asked. "Would He make me well again?" Then as he hesitated for a reply: "Would I have to go away from here?"

"I am afraid so."

"Then I don't want Him to do it; I would rather stay with you," he said, after a few moments of thoughtful silence.

He listened with bated breath to the tale of the mock trial, the crown of thorns and scourging, but when she came to the crucifixion, he started from his pillow with flashing eyes.

"Curse them! curse them!" he cried. "They killed Him," and he burst into bitter tears.

She was frightened by the storm of grief and passion her words had roused, for to her as to the rest of us, the story had lost its startling force by oft repeating. She tried vainly to soothe him, till it occurred to her that the best consolation lay in the resurrection. On hearing of this he quickly dried his eyes.

"Then He was not dead," he said.

"Yes, He was, but He came to life again, and will never die any more."

Then in answer to his wondering looks she pointed out the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, explaining that He came to save and purify us from our sins, that we with Him might enter into everlasting life.

We who have heard these things from infancy can have no idea of the revelation they were to the homeless, suffering child.

To him the gospel was truly good tidings, and he received it with joy touching to behold. Even his habitual silence gave way before his desire to share his new treasure with others. A new quality came into his cheerfulness.

What had once been placid contentment became actual joyousness, and even those who were wont to scoff grew thoughtful before the tokens of his simple faith.

Two years passed. The doctor said he might live many more, but could never walk again. As soon as he was able kind friends taught him to read and write and do pretty handiwork which might bring him a little income. His cot became the brightest spot in the ward, and the other children gathered about it eagerly while he shared