

The Eastroyds and the Murwoods

BY SARAH SELINA HAMER, IN THE 'ALLIANCE NEWS.'

(Chapter V.—The New Vicar. Continued.)

'How thankful I am,' he said to his wife, in view of Mrs. Murwood's return to Clapperton, 'that we shall not be amongst those who will place temptation in the way of a weak sister in Christ. I marvel,' he added, 'that so few Christian people see their duty in this respect, as St. Paul shows us he saw his, in his declaration to the Corinthians, with regard to meat which had been offered to idols, a stumbling block in his day, as strong drink is in ours. "Wherefore," he said, "if meat make my brother to offend I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."'

'I think you had better preach from that text,' said Mrs. Vincent, with a smile.

'I mean to do so, and that very soon,' said her husband; 'and I shall not fail to point out the great need there is for the application of this principle in the matter of alcoholic drinks.'

And the Vicar was as good as his word, backing up his position with such admonitions as:—'Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.' 'It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.' And, 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.'

'I think,' concluded the Vicar, 'and I cannot doubt that most of you will agree with me, that the last clause in the admonition I have just quoted to you, from the writings of St. Paul, clenches the whole argument, fills up any chink of excuse we may have found for ourselves; resolves, in fact, the whole thing into a nutshell—we, as Christians, "ought not to please ourselves," but to please our blessed Master, who has set us the example of pleasing, of helping, of guarding others.'

Matthew Murwood was at church that Sunday evening, and uttering scarcely a word he walked home with Mr. Vincent to the Vicarage.

'Can I speak with you privately?' he asked, when he arrived there.

'Certainly,' said Mr. Vincent, leading the way into his library.

'I have been a great sinner, Mr. Vincent,' he said, when the two were seated, 'in the matter of this use of alcohol. Strong myself, I have had no sympathy with the weak. And terribly I have been punished.'

And then Mr. Murwood, strong, proud man as he was, told the sad story of his wife's weakness and his own obstinacy, in a way which a year ago would have been impossible to him. But much sorrow had humbled and softened him.

'You must have heard of her, of course,' he said, 'and as she is so shortly coming back I thought it right you should know the truth about her. If I had only seen my duty before, as you have made me see it to-night,' he added, with a sorrowful bitterness impossible to describe, 'she need never have gone away; in all likelihood the tendency might have been stifled, and—and I should still have had—my boy. Even after all this had happened,' he went on, 'so dull a scholar have I been that, until to-night, I only meant to keep the drink out of the house, not to give it up myself, by any means. I—I—' But Matthew Murwood could not go on.

'But now—now,' filled in the Vicar, 'you are willing to forego what you can take without danger, for the sake of upholding one who is weak? You no longer wish to please yourself? I thank God for it! Especially am I thankful because, sad as it is to say it, I have known cases where the slumbering appetite for strong drink has been roused by

the mere inhaling of the breath of those who have partaken of it.'

'Draw me up a form,' said Matthew Murwood, hoarsely; 'witness my signing of it, Vincent, and may God forgive my former selfishness and hardness.'

And we need hardly say that the Vicar joyfully complied with the request.

Chapter VI.—Re-Union.

On a day when the summer sunshine was flooding the Brameld Road, and making vivid the pink, and red, and white blossoms in the little garden of Beech Cottage Ellen Murwood came back to Clapperton and to her new home. Everything smiled welcome upon her there. Though comparatively so humble the rooms were all in beautiful order, and adorned with graceful plants and perfumed flowers, looked inviting and cheery. Her husband had met her at the station, and one glance at him had given her the assurance of his full forgiveness, and of his old tenderness for her having been revived. Their children had been brought down from Underbank House, and oh, what a delight it was to Ellen once more to clasp them in her arms.

And Kate was there, with loving sisterly caresses, and merry speeches; and later there came Ernest, to fetch her, and to give his sister an affectionate greeting. Lucy also looked in, and promised to bring her baby on the morrow. No reference was made to the past. It was as if she had been away on a long visit, had been sorely missed, and was now as gladly welcomed. Only her husband, in referring to the change in their worldly circumstances, said to her, when they were alone:—

'I am sorry to bring you to so small a house, Ellen, I am afraid you will find yourself very much cramped.'

And Ellen, nestling close to him, made answer:—

'I do not mind it in the least, Mat. We can begin a new life better here. With God's help,' she murmured, brokenly, 'I do mean henceforth to be a good wife to you; and—a good mother.'

Her husband stooped and kissed her tenderly.

'That past is for ever gone; let us never mention it more,' he said, gently. 'I have been quite as much to blame as you. But as you say, we will begin a new life here. And oh, Ellen dear, it is good to have you home again!'

The Vicar and his wife were amongst their first callers, and Mrs. Vincent, taking a strong liking for Ellen, a firm friendship was soon established between them. Ellen and Lucy, too, soon became as sisters, and living so near saw a great deal of each other. Kate also came, as often as she could to Beech Cottage; but the birth of a little son in October, 'clipped her wings a little,' as her father said.

Joshua Northrop was immensely proud of his little grandson and namesake, and spent quite as much time at Underbank House as he did at Kood Nook, after his advent.

'There is no keeping father out of the nursery,' laughed the happy young mother.

Indeed, it would be difficult to point out three happier homes than at this time were those in whose wellbeing we are most specially interested. But fresh trouble was looming up for them outside. It must always be on or above the horizon of those whose friends tamper with the intoxicating cup.

(To be continued.)

As long as the soldier slinks outside the battle he carries a whole skin; but let him plunge in and follow the captain, and he will soon have the bullets flying about him.—F. B. Meyer.

Lost.

'Reckon you're going to catch it this time, Miss Burnham, and that's no joke.'

Something in the clerk's voice made Louise Burnham look up quickly. Dick Sanford—little, good-natured, kind-hearted Dick, whom she had snubbed ever since she had entered the office, although he had been so unfailingly patient in helping her over hard places—was standing beside her, his queer face furrowed with distress.

'What's the matter?' she asked, alarmed by his expression. 'What have I done?'

'Blundered,' Dick returned, shaking his head. 'It's a pickle and no mistake, Miss Burnham. It was the boss's day to make his big speech, you know, and he fumbled it,—got regularly rattled; couldn't understand it at first,—then discovered half a dozen big blunders in your copy of his notes. I don't want to be in your shoes. I'm not sure I wouldn't put on my hat and walk out before he gets back. I came ahead to warn you.'

Louise grew white and started from her seat. Then she laughed and sank back, carelessly twisting the diamond on her left hand.

'Don't you worry about me, Dick,' she said. 'I'm not going to run a typewriter all my life! If I get turned off now it won't make much difference—nothing but a gown or two, and I've got most an I want, anyhow.'

As it happened she was not turned off then, although she was sharply reprimanded and warned that such carelessness could not be overlooked a second time. Louise took the rebuke sullenly. Three weeks later she was married. Three years later, a widow with a child to support, she applied to her old employer.

Dick was no longer there, and a new clerk took her name and errand. In a few minutes he returned with a note. Mr. Holbrook regretted that Mrs. Stacey's work while in his office had not been of such a quality as to permit him to give her a recommendation.

White and heart-sick, Louise turned away. Before her stretched the long road where, weary and stumbling, an endless procession, the unskilled workers plodded. Oh, if she had but realized when she had her opportunity!—'Youth's Companion.'

Our Daily Reckoning.

If you sit down at set of sun
And count the acts that you have done,
And, counting, find
One self-denying act; one word
That eased the breast of him who heard;
One glance most kind,
That fell like sunshine where it went,
Then you may count that day well spent

But if throughout the livelong day
You've cheered no heart by 'yea' or 'nay'
If through it all
You've nothing done that you can trace
That brought the sunshine to one face
In act most small,
That helped one soul and nothing cost,
Then count that day as worse than lost.
—Selected.

Try it This Week.

Let no day pass without personal secret communion with God.

Begin each day by taking counsel from the Word of God, if but one verse while you are dressing.

Put away all bitter feelings, and brooding over slights or wrongs, no matter from whom received.

Have on your heart some person or cause for which you are pleading God's blessings each day.

Let no opportunity pass without owning your Saviour before others, and modestly urging all to accept His service.

Let no opportunity pass to say a kind word, do some kind deed, or at least smile upon those you meet. Do this, not affectedly, but sincerely as unto the Lord.

Guard well the door of your lips that no unchaste word, jest or story, no slander or cutting remarks, no irreverent or untruthful statement, shall pass out.