



The Family Circle.

LET THE CLOTH BE WHITE.

Go set the table, Mary, an' let the cloth be white!
The hungry city children are comin' here to-night;
The children from the city, with features pinched and spare,
Are comin' here to get a breath of God's unfainted air.

They come from out the dungeons where they with want were chained;
From places dark an' dismal, by tears of sorrow stained.
From where a thousand shadows are murdering all the light;
Set well the table, Mary dear, an' let the cloth be white!

They ha' not seen the daisies made for the heart's behoof;
They never heard the rain drops upon a cottage roof;
They do not know the kisses of zephyr an' of breeze;
They never rambled wild an' free beneath the forest trees.

The food that they ha' eaten was spoiled by other's greeds;
The very air their lungs ha' breathed was full o' poison seeds,
The very air their souls ha' breathed was full o' wrong and spite;
Go set the table, Mary dear, and let the cloth be white!

The fragrant water-lilies ha' never smiled at them;
They never picked a wild-flower from off its dewy stem;
They never saw a greensward that they could safely pass
Unless they heeded well the sign that says "Keep off the grass."

God bless the men an' women of noble brain an' heart
Who go down in the folk-swamps an' take the children's part.
These hungry, cheery children that keep us in their debt,
And never fail to give us more of pleasure than they get!

Set well the table, Mary; let naught be scant or small—
The little ones are coming here; have plenty for them all.
There's nothing we should furnish except the very best
To those that Jesus looked upon an' called to him an' blessed.
—Will Carleton.

A LITTLE DRESS-MAKER.

BY MAUDE RITTENHOUSE.

"There now, that's just as stylish and pretty as it can be!" and Amy Warner gazed complacently into the rosy face reflected in her mirror. "How æsthetic you will look, Mistress Amy! That green is delicious, and the quaint style is as becoming as it can be!"

"Mistress Amy," being often alone in her pretty room, had gotten into a habit of carrying on extended conversations with herself, and the sunny day, the becoming gown (tried on for the last time to receive its finishing touches), and her delight in its prettiness, made the conversation longer and more rapid than usual.

"When I think," she chattered to the Amy in the glass, "of the gowns I used to wear,—that awful blue thing with the baggy basque, and that striped red and brown with the ugly, bunched drapery"—and the sentence ended with an amused laugh, full of little exclamation points.

"That was before I learned to make my own clothes: but now, isn't it trim and pretty, doesn't it set well, and isn't it a very type of simplicity and quaintness? So glad I haven't an ugly, squeezed-up waist! How it would look in this! Now I must remember to keep the velvet tucked up high at the back of the neck, and the point of the corsage straight. To carry out the idea of the cut, I ought to walk rather languidly, and use a dark fan and an old-time vinaigrette. Now I'll lay it

away, till evening, and run and help mamma with Johnnie's shirt-waists."

"Amy, you are invaluable," Mrs. Warner said, watching the young girl's flying fingers a few minutes later, as they deftly handled the new shirt-waists; and yet, pleased as she felt over the timely aid, something that was not pleasure brought the worried little wrinkles to her forehead, before the afternoon was done. She had never noticed before how much Amy talked of dress. Could it be absorbing as much of her thought as it seemed to be? Amy had never been vain, of that she felt sure, for Amy, though bright and sweet and sensible, was not pretty, as everybody knew,—none better than Amy herself.

"Do you remember, dear, two years ago how you wriggled about when Miss Spriggs tried to fit your dresses, how you disliked it, and how you amused us by wishing that people could be 'born with feathers like birds'?"

Amy laughed merrily. "Why, I was thinking of it only to-day," she said, "and some of the frightful-looking things I used to wear. You were not to blame, dear. You couldn't have been expected to plan for so big a girl as I; and poor Miss Spriggs! I don't wonder she never got anything to fit. What a guy, I must have looked!"

"I don't know," Mrs. Warner commented, thoughtfully, "it never seemed so to me. I don't think people ever noticed your clothes much. You always looked happy and bright, and—and healthy."

"Healthy!" laughed Amy. "Oh, you dear funny mamma! You mean that I was exuberantly energetic and busy, don't you? Well, people have to be healthy to keep up that sort of thing very long, sure enough. I guess I was rather a tornado with all the plans I tried to work out, and all the studies I had on hand. And in that red and brown—oh dear!" and Amy laughed again at the thought of it.

Little Mrs. Warner felt a flush upon her cheek. It puzzled her, this new something in Amy. With a view to talking of other things she asked, hastily, "Has Wallace learned his new song yet? Papa is very anxious to hear him sing it."

"Really, mamma, I haven't had a minute to try it with him. You know, last night I was busy as could be, fixing the shirred piece for the front of my new gown, and the night before, I was hard at work on the button-holes. If Wallace were only out of school we could practise in the daytime."

Mrs. Warner sighed the faintest little sigh, but added, cheerfully, "Oh, well, that Tarantelle of yours will make up to papa for the other until it can be learned."

Amy looked rather guilty, though she said nothing. Papa wouldn't ask her to play that night, for they were all going to the concert; perhaps before another evening, she could practise the Tarantelle, as she hadn't for a week. "There now, mamma, the last stitch is done! We'll just have time to brush up for tea," and Amy sped along the hall to her own room. They had very early teas at Elmwood, and as soon as the family had assembled in the library, Wallace cried, "Can't we have a chapter of Zig-zag Journeys now?"

"Oh dear, no! I must run up and dress for the concert."

"Why, it's only half past-six. You used to dress in half an hour."

"Dressing wasn't a fine art then!" Amy retorted, laughingly. "If you knew how many little bits it takes to make my harmony in green—" and already she was up the stairs.

"Seems to me Amy don't have time for nothin' any more," Roger declared, disgustedly. "She used to pump up with me in the swing, and read stories to Johnnie and me, and play tunes for us, and now she's just always a fixin' somethin' or hurryin' to get dressed."

Amy, meanwhile, in her room, was practising just the movement of her fan which seemed best to correspond with the "languid drapery" of the green gown.

It was the Mendelssohn Quintette Club they were to hear, and Amy knew that "everybody" would be there. She hoped that Mrs. Krum, who was just back from New York, would notice how she had improved; she could even fancy her saying, "Why, Amy Warner is growing almost pretty!" She wondered if that overdressed Nell Ward wouldn't feel half-

ashamed when brought into contrast with "this simple, charming thing." She hoped that Lincoln Dale, who was coming for her, would appreciate it,—and then she started and listened. A great pattering rain-drop had hit the window-pane, two, three! Amy shaded her eyes and stared out into the darkness, dismayed.

"Oh dear! Absolutely pouring, and this green spots. I can't wear it! What shall I do? My brown's too shabby, my black silk too nice, and if I wear the terracotta some of those girls will think I haven't had anything new for a year. Besides, I haven't a hat that comes near matching it." Then a bright idea occurred to her. "My old cashmere! I might wear a black lace jabot down the front of it, do my hair in a Psyche knot, and carry mamma's black lace fan. I'll make it look pretty yet."

And it did look pretty, she thought, until she settled comfortably into the good seat Lincoln had secured her, and saw, just before her, Nell Ward in a dress that was "not her own taste, certainly," being particularly tasteful and pretty. Amy lost the first two numbers trying to discover how the odd drapery was attached at the shoulder, and just what the new fashion was in which Nell had dressed her hair.

Going home over moist walks and under clear skies, Wallace and Lincoln and music-loving papa discussed with delight the different beautiful selections they had heard. Amy said little. It was strange how the change in her dress had spoiled her evening's pleasure.

"Never mind, I'll wear it to-morrow night, to Kit Brown's 'Conversazione,'" she thought, and still planning for that, and wondering whether she should wear pink roses or white snow-drops over the green, she fell asleep.

"Amy isn't pretty," her brothers had often commented, "but, oh my, how she can talk!" And, truth to tell, when the merry tongue chattered and the brown eyes danced, her friends often forgot how inclined to plainness her round face was.

But alas for the merry tongue and the dancing eyes at Kit Brown's "Conversazione!" There was nothing piquant about that green gown; it was plain, severe and flowing, and Amy knew better than to ruin its effect by liveliness of manner. Conscience all the evening that she was thoroughly "correct" and looking her best, she yet wondered why she went home feeling blank and dull and dissatisfied.

The sight of the sweeping green gown in the mirror brought a burst of tears.

"I never looked so well, and I never had such a miserable time," she cried. "Everybody else had a jolly evening, even Minnie Beck, in that dowdy old gray-and-brown plaid." And then some new train of thought caused Mistress Amy to sit bolt upright and stare very fixedly at nothing, finally, with an odd laugh, clapping one quick hand over her mouth.

"If thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth," she said. "Dear me! I have been evil-thinking all the time, and I hardly knew it. I thought it wonderfully clever and good to make my own clothes and do my own planning; and to think that I did not see that I was growing vain as vain could be, and actually feeling a contemptuous pity for dear old Minnie and good little Sue! I deserved to have a miserable time! Self-absorbed, ridiculous creature! Did I think of a thing beside how my folds fell, how that velvet set, and how superior in general my array, compared with—the brown-and-gray plaid, for instance? I suppose Minnie hardly knew what she wore. She spent the evening entertaining one and another with bright, interesting bits that did them all good, I know, while I—I couldn't talk at all, really, for fear it wouldn't be 'in keeping.' What a fool I was, and how glad I am that I've the sense to be sorry. God gave me a dose of particular dulness just to open my wicked eyes, and I honestly believe that I've learned the lesson he meant to teach. How could I think sensible, helpful things when my mind was just a cramped little quarter, through which stylish collars, elegant sleeves, and empire gowns went trooping? Now I mean to try to remember that good old quotation from St. Ephraim, 'Think of good, that you may avoid thinking of evil,' and I'll add to it, 'And do a little honest, serious, profitable living, to avoid the snare of frills and draperies and little affections.'"

It was two weeks later that Mrs. Warner said, rather shyly, to Amy, "Do you know, dear, I had an unreasonable little worry about you, not long ago?"

"About me, mamma?" Amy asked; but before any more could be said, Roger's brown head appeared in the doorway.

"Say, sis, papa says he can't get enough of that Tarantelle, and Wallace wants to sing, too. Come down."

"All right, small boy, in a minute. But, mamma," and the clear voice grew suddenly earnest, "I know what you mean, and indeed I hope there'll be no cause for worrying any more. I was as blind as a bat, until, all in a minute, God opened my eyes before a very new kind of mirror. After this, when I fit my new gowns, I mean to think more of another sort of fitness,—the fitness of heart and of soul."

"Now that's the kind of dressmaker I love." Mrs. Warner said, impulsively, watching her daughter out of sight; and a moment later, listening with a glow of pride to the tripping notes of that well-learned Tarantelle, she repeated, emphatically, "the very kind o' dressmaker I love!"—*Golden Rule.*

PEOPLE WHO DON'T ENJOY PICNICS.

The woods, the rocks, the beach, the hammock in the garden, seem natural and delightful places in summer. Yet, scattered among the happy groups which frequent them, the observer can always discover a certain number of persons who appear to be out-of-doors under protest, so little can they accommodate themselves to their surroundings.

They do not recline against mossy banks, on account of the dampness. They never lean back against trees, because of pitch, or gum, or spiders, or black ants. They do not like walking on the sand, because it gets into their shoes; nor on rocks, because those hurt their feet; nor along ferny brooks, for fear of snakes.

They will not venture into a field where browse the gentlest of mild-eyed Jerseys, lest they should be tossed. The most fragrant and roomy of ancient barns can win them no further than its threshold. Within, they would be in terror of horses that might kick; above, of concealed pitchforks in the hay.

They enjoy picnics miserably, sitting bolt upright on folded shawls and carefully examining each article of food offered them to see that nothing has got into it which does not belong there. Occasionally they will discard a cookie, upon which, perhaps, a bit of lichen has fallen, with an air of conspicuous stealthiness suggestive to the other guests of untold horrors—caterpillars at least, or something else not less crawly.

If they go upon the water, they are either sea-sick or plaintively expecting to be so. If they climb a hill, they pant and stumble, and are sure they shall never reach the top without a sprained ankle or a broken leg. Once up, they cannot enjoy the panorama, because they are wondering if coming down won't be even worse. Having descended in safety, they sniff at the raptures of the others and disparage the view they did not really see.

Nor does the weather ever suit them. A sunny day is too hot, a breezy one too chilly. A great white cloud looming in the sky, radiant with golden light, is a "thunderhead"; a silvery haze is a "scaturn," laden with neuralgia. A thunder-storm makes them feel faint. A sprinkle that dampens the shoulders means catarrh; mist floating across a pond, malaria and typhoid fever; a wet foot, pneumonia.

Indigestion is the only disease they do not appear to dread, since they will feast upon pickles and cocoa-nut pie, lobster and ice-cream with refreshing fearlessness. This may be, however, the cause of that "touch of headache," which impels them after supper to lean languidly against somebody's shoulder and look pale, while the rest are clearing up after the feast.

What the Awful Bore is to society indoors, this band of the Great Uncomfortable are to festivity in the open air. They are contented with no occasion until it is over—then they are ready to praise with the utmost animation the scene, the day, the dinner, the conversation, the company, and to lament that no other picnic of the season is likely to turn out half so well!—*Ex.*