



The Family Circle.

THE DEAD YEAR.

[This poem, by John Savage, is considered by the editor of "The Irish Poets" the finest production of the kind in the English language.]

Yet another chief is carried
From life's battle on his spears,
To the great Valhalla cloisters
Of the ever-living years.

Yet another year—the mummy
Of a warlike giant, vast,—
Is niched within the pyramid
Of the ever-growing past.

Years roll through the palm of ages,
As the drooping rosary speeds
Through the cold and passive fingers
Of a hermit at his beads.

One year falls and ends its penance,
One arises with its needs,
And 'tis ever thus prays Nature,
Only telling years for beads.

Years, like acorns from the branches
Of the giant oak of Time,
Fill the earth with healthy seedlings
For a future more sublime.

MRS. DIGBY'S BOYS.

"I'm sorry to hear that of my boys, Mr. Verry; but it's my usual luck."

"You asked me for the truth about your boys, ma'am, and I've told it to you. One can't learn; the other won't."

"They must take after their father then; for I'm neither stupid nor obstinate. Can't you make them brighter?"

"Your boys have the same chance as the others, Mrs. Digby. If a lad does not get on in my school, it's entirely his own fault."

Mr. Verry said this with an air of pride; for he was proud of his school and of himself. He had certainly turned out some clever boys, and was a man of much learning; but Mr. Verry knew more about books than men. He taught boys as we teach parrots. He set them tasks, which he expected them to learn; but he did not show them how to learn; so the stupid boys got on very badly. Then, Mr. Verry was far too important a person to know his scholars individually, or to take much trouble to ascertain the differences and degrees in their capabilities and characters.

Mrs. Digby walked back across the fields troubled in mind. She was always in trouble and complaining of her bad luck, though she was much better off than many women of her class. Her husband was earning good wages; and Mrs. Digby had lately inherited a small cottage. Shortly after her arrival she sent Reuben and James to Mr. Verry's school; but had been too busy to visit the schoolmaster until this morning; and now Mrs. Digby was so upset that she did not wait to walk home with her boys as she had intended.

"Reuben," said his mother, during dinner, "I am sorry you are stupid?"

"Am I stupid?" asked the boy, who was small for his age, smaller than his younger brother, and very sensitive.

"Mr. Verry says you are; and he ought to know."

Stupid! Was Reuben stupid? There had been some allusion to the siege of Troy in their lessons that morning; and when the other boys were playing, Reuben sat under a tree with a translation of Homer, lent him by an assistant master, trying to understand all about Agamemnon, Ajax, Hector, Achilles, and other heroes of that period.

"And you, James," said Mrs. Digby,—"a quick-witted lad like you—what's the good of your father paying for your education if you won't learn?"

"I do all I can, mother; but I don't think I'm made for book-learning. I wish you'd let me leave school, and go to sea."

"You shall go to your Uncle Robert's business some day; that is, if you learn while you have the chance."

A great deal of trouble is caused by people not understanding one another; and I think you will see by this time that neither Mr. Verry nor Mrs. Digby understood Reuben and James. The former was far from stupid; but he was delicate, and this afternoon the June sunshine and the close, crowded school-room gave him such a headache that any mental exertion was painful.

Mr. Verry was a great mathematical scholar. As he stood by a large blackboard he set the most difficult problems for the boys to

mentally work out. Reuben, who knows something about grammar, languages, and history, loses his head in a maze of so many figures; James would sooner be out of doors; but he has an active mind as well as an active body, and must be doing something; so he easily works out the sums. As soon as school is over James has forgotten all about Colenso and Euclid; but Reuben's mind is still full of the "Iliad" of Homer.

During the Midsummer examination Mr. Drew, the curate, said, "I'll give a prize for the best original poem."

"Very kind of you," Mr. Verry said, "though I doubt if any of the boys are capable of producing such an article. However, we can try."

The subject was "Home;" the prize, a copy of Milton's "Paradise Lost." One boy had some ideas which he could not put into verse; another actually discovered that Rome and home rhymed; only one poem was sent in, however, and that was signed, "Reuben Digby."

"And not at all bad for such a little fellow," said the curate, as he gave Reuben the prize.

When the spring came, Mrs. Digby took the train to Stanford, where Uncle Robert was a prosperous grocer.

"My boys have now left school for good," said Mrs. Digby, "and I hope you'll do as you promised, and take them into your business; I want my boys to get on, so we've given them the best education we could afford."

"Wait a minute," said Uncle Robert, who was as sensible as he was good-tempered. "I never promised to have the lads in my shop, though you have often asked me to do so. But as I have no children of my own, Reuben and James shall come into the business, if they are fit for it."

"It's a clean respectable business. I'm sure they'll do all they can to get on."

"Let them come and stay a few days with me, and then I can see what they're made of."

So Reuben and James went to Stanford, and a most pleasant time they had there. Uncle Robert was fond of young people, and was just like a great boy after business hours. The three played at cricket, fished, rowed, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Uncle Robert noticed two things. Reuben read everything he came across; and James was never happy unless moving about in the open air.

Uncle Robert accompanied the boys home, and said to Mrs. Digby:—

"Neither would do much good in a grocer's shop. One's too studious; the other couldn't stand so many hours indoors. They want a lad at the office of the *Stanford News*, and I'll try and get Reuben the place. As for James, the best thing we can do is to make him a bricklayer and builder."

"Nothing better than that!" said Mrs. Digby.

A bricklayer is often earning his two pounds a week when a clerk or shopman is unable to get employment. People should do the work they are most fit for."

Let us see if Uncle Robert knew what he was talking about.

Five years have passed. Some poems in the *Stanford News* have attracted attention, and a London publisher has offered to print them in a volume. The poet is a young man who works in the office of the newspaper, and who has already written several tales and articles for the *Stanford News*. His name is Reuben Digby.

Mrs. Digby is surprised.

"To think of Reuben turning out so clever," she says, "who was so stupid at school. And there's my James, whom I was so afraid would turn out an idle, reckless young man,—sharp as he is,—actually putting money in the bank, and expects soon to be made a foreman."

Five more years: and now what do we see? Reuben Digby is the editor of the *Stanford News*; he also writes for several London magazines and newspapers.

And a young man takes his wife to a neat little house, built by himself out of his savings; and a board in front of that house tells the world that it belongs to "J. Digby, Builder and Contractor."

Square pegs never do in round holes. All young people—idiots excepted—are adapted for certain lines of business more than others; and parents and guardians should think what boys can do best before starting them in life. Many a good workman has been lost through some fond yet foolish mother wishing to see her son in a genteel business.—*British Workwoman*.

QUEER FOLKS.

BY M. E. COMSTOCK.

Robert's wife never complained. We all wondered at it sometimes, for Robert did not seem to prosper in worldly things. They still lived in the little old brown house. Nobody visited them, for Robert's wife never had

time to go anywhere. She never seemed to care about what was going on in her neighborhood. If she heard of a sick person that hadn't many friends she always found time to go and see them. But she was a very busy woman.

Robert and his wife had lived in the little brown house ten years; their children never played with other children; Mrs. Robert kept no servant; Robert had an office on a good street; he was always well-dressed and, though quiet, usually had a pleasant word for everyone; he did his work at such ridiculously low prices that his profits were only steady instead of being large; he said he charged all it was worth; if he was satisfied he didn't know but other people might be.

Robert's wife had a call one day. A new minister had come to their part of the town. He had heard that the occupants of the brown house were very "queer folks." He was told that perhaps he wouldn't be made welcome there.

The minister did not talk about religion the first time he went to Robert's, but when he came home he told his wife that he wished there were more "queer folks" in the world. He heard no slander or gossip at Robert's, though his hostess was very sociable. He saw the best new publications on the table, and although Mrs. Robert admitted she couldn't go to church very often, because she had to stay at home with the baby and to do the necessary housework, he yet found her very familiar with the church movements of the day and with the latest books worth calling "literature," and he wished his wife to go and see her and draw her into society and church-work. Such a woman was too valuable to be spared.

Mrs. Robert rose very early in the morning, for she did all her own work except the little that aunt Miranda, who lived with her, did, and that wasn't much, for Mrs. Robert wouldn't let her.

"You took care of us when we were children, and now you must let us take care of you," she said. So when Aunt Miranda, who was sixty years old, got out the wash-tubs and went to washing, Robert's wife made her sit down. Miss Miranda Gilson had been in the habit of having her own way all her life and she showed proper resentment by going up-stairs and putting on her silk dress and lace collar and coming down and taking a book and reading till dinner time, when Mrs. Robert put her tubs away and said: "Now, Aunt Miranda, if you will be so kind as to set the dinner table for me, I will be very much obliged to you, for really I am very tired."

This was the way the housework was done in Robert's family.

The lately arrived minister sent a delegation of ladies to call on Mrs. Robert. They came into the broken little porch, pulled the well-worn bell wire, and the rustle of their silks and velvets seemed quite to fill the little parlor. Mrs. Robert entered in her calico, and did not seem at all extinguished. The ladies wanted her to go to church, which she said, receiving the tracts they brought her, she would be happy to do if they would allow her to take the baby, or if they would pay her for embroideries she could do evenings, so that she could pay pew-rent, which she thought was very high in their church, and she admitted an involuntary repugnance to sitting in the seats reserved for the poor.

It was the ladies' turn to be discomfited. They blushed a little and laughed at what they termed her pleasantry.

The more intelligent of the two, who wore a camel's hair shawl, to cover the confusion of the moment took up a foreign magazine from the centre-table and said, "Our Alice wanted to subscribe to this, but we thought it too expensive."

"It is worth the price," said Robert's wife. "I do my own house-work in order to save a servant's wages, waste, and board, and appropriate for periodicals."

The ladies felt nonplussed where they had meant to be patronizing and soon took leave, saying: "I hope we shall see you at church."

"Thank you," said Robert's wife, "When Cousin Katie comes I can leave the baby in her care, occasionally, but I presume I shall slip into a little mission-chapel, near by, where the seats are free and my old bonnet will not be so sharp a contrast as to provoke notice. The last time I went to church I heard it remarked upon as I came out, and I don't wonder; it is shabby, but the money I had laid aside for a new one was all I had to give when the cry for help came from the home missionaries."

And the ladies bowed themselves away remarking when they gained the street: "What a very singular person!" This was a remark very frequently made of Robert's wife. They did not know how to place her. Her surroundings were very commonplace; comparatively mean. Mrs. Robert's manner was simple as a child's. "Yet," said Mrs. Velveten, "I never felt so non-plussed in my life."

A second-hand piano was for sale cheap. The owner was selling out. Robert asked refusal of it a short time. He came from the post office and showed a letter and check to his wife. "Ethel can have the piano," he

said. The little girl had a gift for music. Robert brought it to her; he brought out his violin and accompanied and taught her in leisure hours. Summer evenings the sidewalk would be crowded, listening to the music.

Real estate was low, in consequence of a panic in business circles. A lovely, wide, old rambling house, in fine repair, spacious grounds, was for sale for a mere song. Robert bought it and paid for it down. He said the beauty of the place was an educating influence for his children which he could not spare, even if he had to pay for it his "little all." Neighbors wondered and did not know that quiet literary and scientific labors, in which his wife shared, were beginning, now, to bring in an unexpected income. Robert went on in the same business, charging the same low prices. The girls aided their mother in the housework, and the eldest began soon to give music-lessons, her playing having attracted much attention at a charitable concert and brought her solicitations to take pupils.

Mrs. Robert received a great many calls now. Carriages were constantly coming to the door. Her husband had become a leader in literary and musical circles, and Mrs. Robert's quiet deeds of kindness among the needy have been discovered; she was sought for her executive-ness as an officer in various benevolent societies, though she frequently said: "I prefer to go as a private friend to those in trouble, rather than as a delegate of an institution. It helps more."

A wealthy family came to town and took an elegant residence in the next block. Mrs. Social came for Robert's wife to call on them. Mrs. Robert had not time.

"I will defer my call then until you are at leisure," said the lady. "Shall I come next week?"

"I think not," said Mrs. Robert. "In fact I am never at leisure, and, to be frank, I have no intention of calling on them."

"May I ask your reasons?"

"I have implied them. They are people I should never have time for unless they were in trouble."

Mrs. Social flushed. "Indeed they went in the first society in Melbourne. They live elegantly and are very polished in manner and have everything that heart can wish, and could aid us very much in benevolent work."

"I am ready to meet them there and cooperate to the fullest extent."

"Not socially?"

"No."

"I believe them to have committed some crime of which you alone know," said the lady pointedly.

Robert's wife was shocked. "Dear friend," she said, "we must select in this world. Life is short. The issues are great. We cannot afford to drift or act indiscriminately. I would not disparage a fellow-creature, but we must have general principles to act upon. If sincere in my calling I imply desire for acquaintance; this I have not. They may be very superior in many things, but these people are not genuine; they spend before they earn; they outlive their income. I know this from those who have lost by them. They are idle; they are consumers rather than producers; they minister to the general good of society in no legitimate way. It is bad economy of interest and neighborliness to cultivate them."

"Are you not severe? Are not their lavish expenditures a general good to society?"

"Not balancing the evil of waste and extravagance, as some of the fundamental principles of political economy will show."

"You might impart your ideas and do them good."

"I am no reformer. Not good soil wherein to propagate my ideas! No; I've too much to do to take care of the beams in my own eye to try to remove 'motes' in general."

That reminds me of the doctor's sermon last Sunday. By the way, who were those people with you at church. You always have some stranger in your pew; are always picking up 'queer fish,' Ed. says."

"Oh, that was Aunt Patty Rhodes and her daughter. They live away out on the turnpike road and never get a chance to church; I had the use of Mrs. Edsell's carriage, yesterday, and I sent out for them. I must own," said Mrs. Robert, with a smile, "I do enjoy making the Master's own feel at home in His house, and I find many who seem to feel no liberty to even seek a sitting there, because they possess neither silver nor gold."

Robert's affairs, as you judge, were improving. They only increased their industries and kept up all the old simplicity of living. There was always a little surplus to take advantage of opportunities.

William Seely, a troubled, perplexed "good fellow" who was fast worrying himself into a dyspepsia, was a privileged acquaintance who frequently dropped in for an evening to listen to music and forget his money embarrassments.

"I don't see how you do it! he said on one occasion, looking around the pleasant home, paid for and full of happy faces. "I don't