



### The Family Circle.

#### SATURDAY NIGHT.

BY EMMA JANE WORBOISE.

"And is the twilight closing fast?  
I hear the night breeze wild;—  
And is the long week's work all done?"  
"Thy work is done, My child."  
"Must I not rise at dawn of day?  
The night-breeze swells so wild!  
And must I not resume my toil?"  
"No! nevermore, My child."  
"And may I sleep through all the dark?  
The wind-to-night is wild;  
And may I rest tired head and feet?"  
"Thou mayest rest, My child."  
"And are the week-day cares gone by?  
Still moan the breezes wild;  
Have all the sorrows sped away?"  
"All sped away, My child."  
"And may I fold my feeble hands?  
Hush! breezes sad and wild!  
And may I close these wearied lids?"  
"Yes, close thine eyes, My child."  
"And shall I wake again, and hear,  
Ah! not the night-breeze wild;  
But Heaven's own psalm, full, deep, and  
calm?"  
"Heaven's endless psalm, My child."  
"Oh! sweet this last night of the week!  
The breeze sinks low and mild;  
To fall asleep in Thy kind arms!"  
"Is passing sweet, My child."  
"Oh! passing sweet these closing hours!  
And sweet the night-breeze mild;  
And the Sabbath-day that cometh fast!"  
"The Eternal Day, My child!"  
"The night is gone,—clear breaks the dawn;  
It rises soft and mild:  
Dear Lord! I see Thee face to face!"  
"Yes, face to face, My child!"

—Christian World.

#### HELEN'S PRAYER.

BY GERTRUDE H. LINNELL.

The hour for the Sunday-school was drawing near the close, and already the hum of many voices was beginning to be hushed, but Miss Alice was still bending forward, earnestly talking to her class. "We may ask God for anything we want. He says: 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.'" "But it can't mean exactly that," said Helen Portman, "for we all know that lots and lots of prayers of real good people are never answered!" Miss Alice hesitated. She hardly understood Helen, who had been a member of the class but a short time, and who often made such speeches in a rather pert, thoughtless manner. Just then the superintendent's bell rang, and she said, hurriedly: "There is not time to talk more now. Come and see me soon, and we will try to find out just what our Lord teaches us about prayer." Helen made no reply, and as Miss Alice watched her passing down the aisle she said to herself: "She is not in earnest. She has probably forgotten the whole matter already." But Miss Alice did her an injustice this time. Helen had not spoken thoughtlessly, and as she walked home she was thinking of the text, and determining to pray as she had never prayed before for one thing she greatly desired. Helen was not a popular girl, though she was acknowledged as a leader among her schoolmates. She had lived in the town only a year, and her previous city training had enabled her to take easily a high position in her classes. She was on good terms with all the girls, though she made no special friends, and they admired her, but felt a sense of constraint in her society. Early in the school year it had been announced to the school that Judge Williams had offered a prize of \$25, for the best composition upon some subject to be chosen by the girls themselves, and great was the interest in the contest. The competitors were busy with reference books and rules

of composition, and the teacher of the class was to be seen at all odd moments explaining to an eager group some of the points in question. To the surprise of all, Helen refused to enter into the contest.

"It is lucky for *nous autres*," exclaimed Bessie Hardy. "If you did try, Helen, all I could say would be 'poor little me'!" "I am sorry you will not, Helen," said her teacher. "The girls are making great progress, and it is just what you need."

But a few weeks before the compositions were to be sent to the committee for examination, Helen suddenly asked permission to compete.

"All's up, girls," said Bessie. "Helen enters the list, and I think we had better succumb—cumb—cumb."

"What in the world induces her to come in just at the last? It can't be for the money?"

"For the honor, my dear, to show us how easily she can go over the ground where we have been plodding for weeks!"

Helen overheard and her cheeks grew flushed, but she passed the group of girls as though she had not heard them. How could she explain, when it was just the money she wanted?

In one of the long lonely walks of which she was fond, she had lately come upon a shabby little house at some distance from the village, where, pressed against the small window panes, was the sweet, pale face of a little child.

Helen was attracted by the wistful smile in the blue eyes, and made overtures for acquaintanceship which were eagerly returned. She found that the smile and eyes belonged to a pretty little boy, lame and ill, the only child of a poor mother, more of a stranger to the place than Helen herself. Ever since it had been her great delight to go to the house with various little gifts, and to be received with adoring and untiring affection by Frankie.

As the spring days drew near she had thought how delighted mother and child would be if she could give them a large wicker carriage. What pleasure for poor little Frankie to be drawn through the woody paths or even into the village streets!

But when she asked the price of a carriage large and comfortable enough for the child, it was far more than she expected, more than she could pay. Then she remembered the prize, and at once decided to enter the contest.

She had little anxiety about the result. It was so generally conceded by the girls that she would be successful, it was natural she should think so herself. But a few days before the Sunday of which we have spoken her security was shaken. As she happened to pass the school-room one day, a little after school hours, she heard one teacher say to another:

"I suppose there is no doubt but that Helen Portman will take the prize."

"I am not sure," was the reply. "I think these two equally good. It is very close. I am glad I shall not have to decide."

Helen hurried away with a new sense of anxiety and excitement. Was it possible that she could fail? Oh, she could not, she must not! If only she had begun earlier! But the decision was not yet made, she would not give up hope yet, and in the meantime she would pray that the choice might be in her favor—yes, earnestly pray for it.

And she had prayed all the week. As she walked home from Sunday-school she was reassuring herself with these "comfortable words": "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer!" It must be God's will that she should bring this enjoyment, this new life to that dear, patient, little cripple. Helen prayed indeed.

At last the commencement day came. The school-room was crowded with visitors: there were music and flowers, and the girls in pretty white dresses went through their performances to the great satisfaction of their friends. As the time drew near for the announcement of the prize, Helen's heart beat suffocatingly fast. At last Judge Williams came forward on the platform. He spoke at some length of the general excellence of all the compositions, and of the difficulty of deciding upon the best, but finally announced that the prize had been awarded to "No. 13." No. 13 proved to be Miss Ruth Palmer, a quiet, unobtrusive girl, who came forward

covered with blushes to receive her reward. Helen controlled herself sufficiently to smile at her as she passed, and to join the other girls who crowded around her with congratulations when the exercises were over, but when once more alone in her room she threw herself on her bed in a passion of weeping. The disappointment for Frankie was great, and wounded self-love and vanity would make themselves heard. To be distanced by Ruth Palmer—by any of those girls! It was so hard. And under and through it all was the one recurring thought of how she had prayed. She had believed, she had been so in earnest, and all in vain. It was not true that God would always answer prayer, and how could she ever pray again except for some indefinite blessing. And Helen did not pray for several days till her heart grew heavier and sorer than ever with the consciousness of wrong-doing, until, one evening, the whole story was told to her mother.

"Now, Helen dear," said that loving confidant, after a little silent petting, "let us suppose that you and I were to decide which of these compositions that seemed equally good was to have the reward, and some one were to say to us, 'Since there is so little to choose between them, give the prize to the girl who has prayed for it most earnestly,'—would that seem quite fair to you? Would it not seem fairer if we were to reply, 'No; since the prize is for the best composition, not for the girl who wants it the most, we must go over them again more carefully, and see if we do not find some excellence in one, or evidence of more study, something that will show that there is really one better than the others.' Do you not think so?"

"Yes, mamma."  
"And then, too, perhaps they all prayed. Ruth Palmer may have had as good a reason as you had for asking for this money."

"Yes, mamma. I know that Ruth worked hard for it—ever so much harder than I did. But the trouble is, if she was praying for it, and the other girls, and myself, of course God could not answer all our prayers, and how can we ever hope or expect it?"

"We need only think of yours, Helen. Perhaps it is to be answered yet. Tell me truly, dear, which did you want most—the honor of being first, or the carriage for Frankie?"

"Really, I think, mamma, I hope it was for the carriage, but I did care a great deal about being first. The girls were all sure I would win."

"We can easily see why it may not have been best for you to have that desire granted. You know, dear, it is your temptation to feel yourself a little superior to these other girls. Perhaps you have been fancying that you could easily get, just by your cleverness, what would cost them hard work."

"Yes 'm!" said Helen, humbly.

"But Frankie's carriage was a bright and kind thought of your's, dear—and we will try to think of some other way, and keep on praying about that. How would you like to ask all the girls to help? You might take them over to see Frankie. I know they would be interested, and perhaps, altogether, it will not take us long to earn enough for a carriage."

"Oh, but, mamma, I did so want to do it all myself!"

"Ah, Helen dear, I see so well how much you needed just this lesson! When you are sure that what you want most is for Frankie to have the carriage, and not for Helen Portman to have all the honor, I am sure the right way will be made clear to us."

Helen was too truthful not to see the justice of her mother's words, but the struggle was a long and hard one before unselfishness and humility won the victory. But when once she yielded, she did it thoroughly. The girls were admitted to her fullest confidence, and they enthusiastically undertook the work.

It would take too long to tell of how they accomplished it—of the work and the fair—and the crowning fun of fitting up the carriage with afghan and cushion, and taking Frankie out for his first ride. That evening Helen spent again in her mother's room, gratefully counting over the many answers to her prayer.

There was the good to Frankie to begin with. Not the carriage alone, but now,

instead of one little girl, there was a whole society of loving friends, over whom he ruled, a despotic, but bewitching little king; and fathers and mothers and aunts, too, had found their way to Frankie's home, till his mother began to think the village an earthly paradise.

Then there was the good it had been to the girls. They had so enjoyed the society and the work that they voted to keep working all winter, and as Frankie's wardrobe was now in good order, to adopt some other little waif that needed their care. Helen was unanimously chosen president. Even her hope of leading among the girls had found its fulfilment—but oh! in so much worthier a way.

Helen could hardly count the many answers her prayer had brought to herself. The new interests with which her life was filled, new friendships and affections, the determination to do more thorough work at school—all this was a great gain. But better still, and a much greater gain, was the new thought of God's care and love for her, and a new sense of trust in him. Helen was learning that God's will might be for her not only the very best, but the very happiest thing. She was learning how to pray—to tell her Heavenly Father of all her thoughts and hopes and plans, to leave them all in his care, and then to look patiently for his guidance. And if sometimes the answer seemed withheld, she was learning still to wait hopefully, saying sometimes to herself:

"The prayers I thought unanswered once, were answered in God's own best way."—*Charleyman*.

#### CHARLEY'S WRITING BOOK.

We elderly people remember our school-days. We don't have such school-houses as we used to have. Rough benches, with splinters in them. Old desks, made out of the same material. A man teacher in winter and a woman teacher in summer. The principal qualification of the teacher was to know how to handle to good advantage many birches a day. He spent a great deal of his time making quill-pens for the scholars, and had a hard time teaching some of us to write. We had almost as many stripes on our backs as we had blots on our books. I could learn mathematics and geography, but it was hard to learn to write. When the new lady teacher came one summer, with a sweet face and loving heart, she seemed to understand the boys. She looked at my writing-book and said, "Well Charley, it looks pretty bad, doesn't it?" and I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said: "Charley, we will make the last half of that book look better than the first half looks. Let me see your pen." And she took it and mended it with her knife. Every day she would sit by me and take my rough hand in hers to show me how to make the letters, especially the capitals. That writing-book began to look better, right away. We always had to take our writing-books home to father when they were finished, just as we are going to take the record of this life home to Father when it's done. Remember that, young man. You are going to take it with you when you go. My teacher and I went through that writing-book, and it looked better, every page, until it was written through. Then she went with me to our house, and she said to my father, "Mr. Morton, you must not look at the first half of Charley's book. Look at the last part." So he examined the part that my teacher had helped me with, and said, "I don't find any fault with that." Christ said: "Now I am going to help you make your life better." He takes our hand in His hand, and He never leaves nor forsakes us. He will stand by us, and when we go home our Heavenly Father will only look at the part of the book that His dear Son helped us to make, and all the rest will go for nothing. "Behold, I make all things new." Our Heavenly Father will be satisfied with the record Christ helped us to make. There may be some in this congregation saying to themselves: "If my life were not so bad, I believe I would take Mr. Morton's advice, and try to be a Christian, but what hope is there for me?" It worries you. Christ will blot it out. He will draw his hand over the black record and blot it all out forever.—*Rev. C. M. Morton of Chicago*.