



The Family Circle.

"SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD."

ST. MARK XIV. 8.

In Simon's house the Master sat at meat ;
Then Mary took a box of spikenard rare
And brake it on His head, and wiped His feet
With the soft splendor of her trailing
hair ;
And lo ! the wafting of the ointment spilled
With costly fragrance all the dwelling filled.

Then some there were that murmured at her
sore :

"Why was the ointment squandered all
for naught ?"

But Jesus bade them trouble her no more :

"This is a good work that her hand hath
wrought ;

Her precious 'nard aforetime did she bring
To grace my body for the burying.

"Yea, what she could she did. Beneath the
sun,

Wherever men shall preach this word of
Mine,

There also shall this thing that she hath done
Be told for her memorial and sign."

So spake the Lord of her, by men withstood,
Who gave, in trustful love, what gift she
could.

Mary, thine ointment poured upon His head,
Mute homage of thy loving, longing soul,
Only throughout the house its odor shed ;
Thy deed is wafted forth from pole to
pole,

Through the long lapse of never-ending years
A holy perfume in disciples' ears.

And lowly souls henceforth shall courage
take,

Recalling thy memorial fond and sweet ;
Though poor their service for the Master's
sake,

Yet bold to lay it at His blessed feet,
Trusting to hear Him say, "O servants good,
Ye, too, have done for Me what thing ye
could."

FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE.

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THE WRONG PROMISE.

BY HOPE LEDYARD.

"Well ! At last Christmas has really
come !"

"Oh, Kitty ! Have you seen Santa Claus ?"

asked six-year-old Nell, thinking, from her
sister's tone, that she certainly had let the
children's saint in at the front door.

"Not exactly ; but he has sent something
—a big—"

"A tree ! a tree !" screamed both Nell and
George.

"Yes, a tree, and now all that's left is for
mother to dress it, and I'm to help her."

As Katy pronounced these last words, she
seemed to grow taller before the children.

They stared with wonder, and she bore her
honors anything but meekly, looking pro-

vokingly self-satisfied and with an "I'm-so-
much-bigger-than-you" air that George, who
was nearly nine, "only wished she were a boy
so's he could thrash her."

"Yes, I'm to help ! That is, if you look
after Jenny and the baby" (George at once
resolved that Baby should have a trying time) ;
"and if you both will be very good and keep
the little ones amused, I'll—"

Kate paused.

"What'll you do ?" asked Nell, eagerly,
while George mentally held the baby balanced
between a state of rapture and one of anguish.

Kate looked cautiously around.

"I'll let you two see the tree to-night !"

To tell the truth, this was a very sudden
resolution of Kate. She could not think
in an instant what to promise. Her pocket-

money had all gone for card-board, worsteds,
and the etceteras of Christmas work. Apples
her great resource, had failed of late, and in
her eager desire for a free time she made a
promise which she knew was wrong. But,
if wrong, it was very successful. Nell's face
may have looked doubtful, but George, the
great enemy of peace, was evidently gained

over. Baby was sure to be whistled to and
"jounced," instead of teased and tormented.

It was the custom in the Reade family to
have the Christmas tree on Christmas morn-
ing, because then the little ones were bright
and able to enjoy it fully. Besides, as Mrs.
Reade argued, they then had the day before
them for enjoying the presents, instead of
having to go to bed in a state of excitement
and impatience for the morning.

"Tate, mamma's doin' to bring'er baby
down wight away !" said Jenny, marching in
with her apron full of kittens. It was clear
that the household was upset, or Jenny's
kittens would not have been allowed in the
sitting-room. The tree was to be in the
nursery, and so, for that day, all the children
were to stay down stairs.

"Here, Kate," said Mrs. Reade, coming in
with Baby in her arms, "here's the darling ;
get them all happy and contented, and then
you may come upstairs."

It was wonderful what a sudden turn for
Kindergarten pleasures, of the very simplest
kind, George developed. He rolled balls
about the room, and was so attractive that
even Jenny forgot her pets and joined in the
game. Kate slipped off, delighted with her
success.

"That was a lucky thought," she said to
herself, complacently, and then soon forgot
promise, Baby, and all, in the delight of
hanging cornucopias, climbing the step-ladder,
and balancing the Christ-child on the very
top of the tree.

As for the mother—like all mothers—she
loved her children, if possible, a little more
than ever, as she hung the presents which
had been obtained through much self-denial
and patience on her part. It was very
delightful to sit down and look on, instead
of doing all the work herself ; and as Kate's
eyes danced with pleasure while she hung up
George's sled and Nell's new muff, never
seeming to notice the utter lack of anything
for herself, the mother felt as if this eldest
daughter was the jewel of all.

"I haven't heard a quarrelsome word nor
a scream," she said, after an hour or two of
busy work. "Just step to the door, Katy,
girl, and make sure all is right."

As Kate opened the door, a peal of merry
laughter sounded from the room below.

"That's answer enough, isn't it, mother ?"

"You must have bewitched them, Kate,"
said Mrs. Reade—"given them some of
your own good temper, my dear little
daughter."

Kate was tying on the oranges, and we all
know how bothersome that part of the
dressing must be ; perhaps that was why her
face flushed and she did not give her mother
the grateful look which usually repaid Mrs.
Reade for words of praise. But the mother
did not miss the look ; her thoughts had gone
on to the other children, to the boy whose
teasing ways gave her so much trouble, and
Kate seemed so grown up and womanly that
Mrs. Reade spoke out her thoughts, as if to
an older friend.

"George is a trying boy ; he vexes you often
I know, Kate, and his father, too. Still we
must have patience ; almost all boys tease
their sisters, and if only he is truthful and
upright, doing no sly, deceitful things, I don't
mind the teasing ; he will learn a truer man-
liness by and by. The boy is kind-hearted,
after all ; but, Katy, I am so afraid lest
George should learn to be—to be—not exactly
upright and truthful !"

Mrs. Reade's tone was so anxious that Katy
forgot her oranges for a moment, and, fling-
ing herself at her mother's feet for a rest
(perhaps, too, to take in the general effect
of the tree from a little distance), said rather
absently : "Oh, George is truthful enough ;
he despises lying."

"Yes ; but have you noticed the difference
between Nell and George ? You remember
about the citron-cake, don't you ?"

"Yes, mother, but George owned that he
had taken it."

"Yes ; but Nell was so hurt that any one
could think she would be so mean as to take
a thing slyly. 'If I took it at all, I'd take it
when you were looking, mother,' she said,
and I believe the child spoke truly—she might
disobey, but she never would tell falsehood
about it. She is the soul of honor."

What is the matter ? Somehow the tree is
not half so beautiful in Kate's eyes as it was.
She tries to get up her interest again, and
laughs and jokes, hailing Aunt Mary's en-
trance with delight, for she feels that she can-
not bear any more of this confidential talk.
Nell the soul of honor !

The startled, doubtful look in the child's
face is explained. Kate is sure, now, that

Nell will take no peep at the Christmas tree,
and she is quite as sure that she herself will
be mean and deceitful if she keeps her
promise to George. Something must be
done. A happy thought strikes her.

"Mother," she says, "the tree is all finish-
ed so early—won't you have it to-night,
instead of to-morrow morning ? The Tracys,
and Campbells, and Manns all have theirs to-
night."

"To-night ! The tree to-night ? Why,
Kate, child, have you forgotten your Christ-
mas-eve party, at Mary Mann's, which you
have talked of for a month past ? Besides,
your father is kept so late at the store to-
night, you know, that we couldn't keep the
children up."

No, it was impossible ; and Kate, to forget
her anxiety and quiet her conscience, went
down to the children. The moment she
opened the door, George sprang up, saying,
in a cautious undertone :

"Are you through ? When are we to
see ?"

With her mother's words in her mind, the
boy's tone was painful to Kate.

"We're all through," she said, with a poor
attempt at dignity ; "but, George (with
sudden desperation, as she noted his eager
expression), 'can't I buy off from my
promise ?'"

The boy scowled angrily. "I should
think not ! Here I've been playing nurse
for two hours and more, besides keeping
Jenny quiet ! No ; you promised and I
must get a look, unless—" said George,
always ready to seize an advantage, and feel-
ing sure he was suggesting something im-
possible—"you'd give me your skates in-
stead."

To his surprise Kate did not laugh at the
idea—she neither accepted nor refused his
offer. Baby, tired from his busy play, was
dropping asleep, and in five minutes George
had gone out to the street, Jenny had wan-
dered into the kitchen, and only Nell and Kate
were left in the room.

"You don't care to look, do you ?" said
Kate, feeling fairly ashamed to ask the sturdy
little woman such a question.

"I wasn't going to," was the short reply.

"What does she think of me ?" thought
Kate, and, anxious to raise herself in Nell's
eyes, she tried to explain matters.

"I really didn't think, Nell, how mean it
was, and now I don't want to show George
—it's bad for him—but I can't help it !
Unless—"

Kate paused—the alternative was too
dreadful. Kate's one ambition for the last
year had been a pair of club-skates ; though,
as she often said, how she ever came to hope
for them was strange, as she knew very well
that her parents, with their limited means,
could never spare the money for such ex-
travagance. But, most unexpectedly, it
happened that Kate's godmother, whom
she never saw and who had never given her
even a christening present, had suddenly
awakened to a sense of what (in most cases)
is expected of godmothers, and on Kate's
birthday, which came in October, had sent
five dollars to be spent on "something that
would give the child pleasure." Kate over-
looked the term "child" in her delight at
owning the wherewithal for the coveted
skates. They had been bought at once, and
only twice since had the ice been strong
enough for Kate to use them ; but again and
again she had put them on. George, too, had
been allowed to prove that they fitted him
quite as well as they fitted Kate. And now,
either she must cheat and lead George astray,
or give up those precious skates ! She could
not do it !

All this has taken time to tell, but Nell, as
her sister paused, said quietly, as if it were a
very easy matter :

"He said he'd take the skates instead."

Kate fairly writhed. So Nell had heard ?

"I know ; but, Nell—my skates !"

In was a tone that a mother might have
used in speaking of parting from her child,
and the distress was so deep that even Nell,
who was not so warm-hearted or impulsive
as Kate, felt sorry for her sister.

"I wish I could get you another pair. Oh,
I'll tell you ! I'll ask Santa Claus !"

Now it happened that so far Nell's little
wants had all been within the compass of her
parents' means, so, having received what she
had asked for, she had most implicit faith in
Santa Claus. Kate envied the little girl's
faith—it would have made her sacrifice so
much easier.

"Daughter," called her mother at this
moment, "put on your things and take

this note to the store, and wait for an an-
swer."

Here was a respite. Delighted at the
prospect of a walk down Broadway, the girl
hurried off. She grew so interested in the
Christmas show-windows, besides meeting
two or three of her school friends whose chat
diverted her mind, that by the time she
reached the store she had quite forgotten
George and her promise, and felt quite cheer-
ful and bright again. She stepped up to her
father, who, instead of looking bright and
cheerful, was standing talking hurriedly to
some gentlemen, and appeared to have just
heard bad news.

"Ah, Katy ! Dear, dear !" he said, in an
excited tone. "I shall have to tell your
mother, child ! Sam Barker has just been
discovered cheating—he has robbed his em-
ployers, little by little. I hardly could feel
worse if it were one of you. Oh, Katy, my
girl," and her father's voice was strangely
solemn and impressive, "never cheat nor
deceive, at any cost—at any cost."

The news, his word and looks, brought her
trouble all back to Kate, but she saw it in a
clearer light.

"George will see what I think of cheating,
and perhaps he will learn a lesson as well as
myself. I was a fool to make such a promise,
but I'll give up my skates."

Back she went, and at the corner of the
street George met her.

"Hurry up," he said. "There's a good
chance now—mother's putting Jenny to bed,
and we can slip up easily. Nell isn't going
to look."

"Did she tell you why ?"

The boy hung his head.

"She says it's mean. But you proposed
it, so it can't be so very bad."

"It is mean, George, and bad ; and oh,
George, I'll give you my skates, only never,
never deceive and rob your employers !"

Poor Kate's overtaxed nerves gave way,
and she almost sobbed in the street, while
George, blank with astonishment, stood star-
ing at her. When he heard what Sam Barker,
whom he had known so well, had done, it
may be he appreciated his sister's feelings, in
part, but he could not resist keeping Kate to
her bargain, and so hurried her home to give
him the skates.

On entering the house, Kate ran upstairs,
full of indignation at George's intense selfish-
ness, and yet happier than she had been all
day.

"Here they are," she said, throwing upon
the sitting-room table the pretty blue flannel
bag which she had taken so much trouble to
make.

George was ashamed to take them, but as
she ran out of the room instantly, he lifted
the bag from the table, and then hurried to
his room to gloat over his treasures, and
prepare the heels of his shoes. But as he
polished his "beauties" he suddenly stopped
and listened. Nell had been sent up to
bed, and through the open door of the next
room to his, George heard this strange little
prayer :

"Please, Santa Claus, bring sister Kate a
pair of club-skates. She feels awfully, Santa
Claus, but she wants George to be a truly
true boy. So give her the skates. For
Jesus' sake. Amen."

The boy held the skates, and thought. He
was not inclined to smile at the idea of pray-
ing to Santa Claus, for he suddenly realized
that it is from God that every good gift—
small as well as great—comes. "And He is
sending me presents—nice things, I'll be
bound ! How mean I must look to Him !"

The skates were shoved into the bag,
wrapped in brown paper, and then, with a
feeling somewhat like reverence, George
wrote, in his best hand, "Katy, from Santa
Claus."

* * * * *

The morning dawned clear and cold ; no
chance for sleds, but skates would be at a
premium. The Reade family were all up
betimes, you may be sure, and though the
parents felt the shock of their young friend
Barker's sin and disgrace, they let no sign
of it mar the jollity of the Christmas pro-
ceedings. The children chattered at the
breakfast table in joyful anticipation of the
coming delights.

"There's a present on the tree that no-
body knows of but me," said Nell.

Mother smiled at the notion, while George
thought of a hidden bundle, with its string
all ready to be tied to the tree, and felt
wonderfully happy and important.

Kate was too sympathetic and fond of the
little ones to allow her own trouble to shadow
her face, but it must be owned that one cor-