



The Family Circle.

SOMEBODY'S MOTHER.

The woman was old and ragged and gray
And bent with the chill of the winter's day:

She stood at the crossing and waited long
Alone, uncared for, amid the throng

Of human beings who passed her by,
Nor heeded the glance of her anxious eye.

Down the street with laughter and shout,
Glad in the freedom of school let out,

Came the boys like a flock of sheep,
Hailing the snow piled white and deep,

Past the woman, so old and gray,
Hastened the children on their way,

Nor offered a helping hand to her,
So meek, so timid, afraid to stir,

Lest the carriage wheels or the horses' feet
Should crowd her down in the slippery street.

At last came one of the merry troupe—
The gayest laddie of all the group:

He paused beside her and whispered low:
"I'll help you across, if you wish to go."

Her aged hand on his strong, young arm
She placed, and so, without hurt or harm,

He guided the trembling feet along,
Proud that his own were firm and strong.

Then back again to his friends he went,
His young heart happy and well content.

"She somebody's mother, boys, you know,
For all she's old and poor and slow:

"And I hope some fellow will lend a hand,
To help my mother, you understand,

"If ever she's poor and old and gray,
When her own dear boy is far away."

And "somebody's mother" bowed her head
In her home that night and the prayer she said

Was: "God be kind to the noble boy,
Who is somebody's son and pride and joy!"
—Harper's Weekly.

MRS. BARNEY'S SERMON.

Strangely enough, the cellar stairs preached it—at least they contributed that very important part, the application. Sister Searls had furnished the text in the morning, but then the sermon might have gone on from firstly to forty-seventhly without Mrs. Barney's notice, had it not been for the cellar stairs.

Mrs. Barney was hurried that day: she was always hurried,—and it was warm and uncomfortable in the sunshiny, stove-heated kitchen, where she was hastening to and fro growing fretted and tired without slackening her speed. Nealie, standing at the ironing-table, was tired also.

"There's so much to do," she said, wearily. "I don't see why we need do baking and ironing both in one day. It makes such a crowd, and we could have left one for to-morrow."

"To-morrow will bring work enough of its own," answered Mrs. Barney quickly. "Besides, if we should get the work all out of the way the first of the week, a whole day to rest in would be worth something."

"But then we shouldn't take it for resting, just because it would be a whole day, and something else would be crowded into it," murmured Nealie, to whom one hour now looked very inviting, and that possible day in the future very uncertain.

The mother did not answer, and the young girl's hand moved more slowly over the damp muslins as her gaze wandered away to the hills where great trees were throwing cool shadows. How pleasant the shade and greenness were! The desire to bring it nearer suggested another thought to Nealie. "Some vines would be so nice at this window, mother. I could plant them, if you would let Tom dig a little spot out there."

"Yes, but if we ever got the house fixed up as we want it, we shall have shutters at that window."

"But we don't know when we can do that, and the vines would be so pretty now," urged Nealie.

"Pretty? Well, yes, if we had the whole yard trimmed and laid out as it should be. I

hope we shall have it some day; but a stray vine here and there seems hardly worth fussing over, when we can't have the whole done."

Nealie sighed, but was silent, and presently Tim came in with an armful of wood.

"Nealie," he said, pausing near her table, "if you'd just sew this sleeve up a little. The old thing tears awful easy, and I just hit it against a nail."

He spoke low, but Mrs. Barney's quick ears caught the words.

"That jacket torn again, Tim? I never saw such a boy to tear things to pieces! No, Nealie can't stop to mend it now, and I can't, either. I've been intending to get you a new one, but there doesn't seem much chance to make anything new, while you contrive to make so much patching and darning on the old."

Mrs. Barney shut the oven door with a snap. Tim was the hired boy, kind-hearted but careless, and he was rather discouraging. Board and clothing sometimes appeared to her a high price for his services. "Hurry now, and pick some currants for dinner," she said.

Tim took the tin pail pointed out to him, but he did not hurry as he passed with clouded face down the walk. The thought of a new jacket would have been very pleasant a few minutes before, but it had suddenly lost its attractiveness. The boy drew his bushy brows into a scowl, and as soon as he was out of sight of the house threw himself upon the grass and began his currant-picking in a very leisurely style. Then it was that sister Searls drove up in her rattling old buggy, with a horse that was, as Tim said, "a regular old revolutionary pensioner."

"If I can't have fine horses and carriage, I can take a deal of comfort with these," was always sister Searls' cheery comment upon her equipage. She had an errand at Mrs. Barney's, and stopped on her way to the village. A plump, rosy-faced little woman she was, not young, only that she belonged to a class of people who never grow old; neatly dressed, though it was "but that old poplin made over," Mrs. Barney noticed while she was talking, wondering a little that she should have "taken the trouble, when she surely needed a new one."

"This room is too warm to ask any one to sit in," she said, apologetically, placing a chair for her caller just outside the door. "When we are able to have the house altered to suit us, I shall not have a stove here in the summer."

"In the meantime you have this nice, cool porch. What a pleasant place it is!" said sister Searls, admiringly.

"Yes, if one had time to enjoy it," answered Mrs. Barney, with an uneasy laugh. "I'm so hurried, trying to get everything about the place in just the right order, that I don't have time!"

"Take time, sister Barney, take time!" said Mrs. Searls, smiling, but earnestly. "Make the most of what you have while you are working for something better. Don't crowd out any little sweetness you have to make room for some great pleasure that's farther off. You see," she added, blushing a little, as if her words needed excuse, "it's something I had to learn myself, years ago—never to trample on daisies in a wild chase after roses. The roses I haven't found, but the daisies have been enough to make the path bright."

Mrs. Barney looked upon her in some perplexity, as she took her departure. She had listened, with one-half her mind on the loaves of bread in the oven, and the other half did not fully comprehend what had been said.

"Daisies and roses! I don't see what any sort of flower has to do with wanting a new kitchen! But there! I suppose ministers' wives, even if they are only country ministers' wives, hear so much talk that it comes natural to them. Bits of old sermons, like as any way. Dear me! I don't get much time for poetry in my life: I'm sure of that. How Tim does loiter!"

Tim, meanwhile, had sauntered out from among the bushes, and was engaged in untying the old horse that Mrs. Searls had fastened as securely as if it could be induced under any circumstance to run. He was moved to this act of gallantry, partly because he really liked the cheery little woman, and partly because he heard Mrs. Barney call, and was in no haste to go to the house.

"That will do, thank you, Tim," said sister Searls, nervously anxious to expedite his steps in the way of obedience. "I think Mrs. Barney is calling you."

"Yes'm; she mostly always is," answered Tim, philosophically, pausing to arrange the harness with painful deliberation.

"But, my dear boy," urged sister Searls, reading something in the knitted brows, "you really should try to please and help her all you can, you know. She is kind to you."

"Oh, yes, she's kind! Only when I see one of her kindnesses a comin' I dodge it; it generally hits a fellow hard enough to be uncomfortable," responded Tim. Then having relieved his feelings by this statement, his conscience pricked him slightly, and he added: "You

see, she's always in such a hurry. She can't come and bring 'em; she has to hitch 'em."

Mrs. Searls meditated as she drove down the country road.

"Well, I never thought of that before, but I do suppose that's why the Bible speaks of the Lord's 'loving kindness,' and 'tender mercy'—because there is so much kindness in the world that isn't one bit loving, and so much mercy that is only duty and not tenderness. I'll tell Josiah that." For it happened that while the good minister pored over his books and studied theology, his wife, going here and there, studied humanity. And though he cooked his own sermons, she often seasoned them.

The baking was done at last, the currants picked, and Mrs. Barney's dinner ready.

"For the bounty bestowed upon us may we be duly grateful," murmured Mr. Barney with head bowed low over his plate. Then he looked up and remarked that he was tired of a steady diet of ham and eggs, and didn't see why they couldn't have a little variety.

"You would see if you had to cook in the hot kitchen as I do," responded Mrs. Barney, more shortly than her wont. "I'm glad to have whatever I can get most quickly and easily. When we have a summer kitchen we can begin to live as other people do."

"If we ain't all old as Methuselah," complained Master Tommy, in an undertone, which was perfectly audible; "anyway, the chickens will be, if we can't have any cooked till that time." He had sniffed the odors of the baking on his homeward way from school, and settling his juvenile mind upon chicken pie for dinner, had been grievously disappointed.

Warm and weary with her morning's work, the questions and suggestions fretted Mrs. Barney. She felt wounded and aggrieved too, as she moved about silently after dinner. No one seemed to see that she cared as much for things nice and comfortable as did the others, she said to herself. She cared far more, indeed, since she was willing to do without much now, and work and plan for the sake of having things all that could be desired by-and-by. How many present comforts and conveniences she had foregone for that! Those very cellar stairs, toward whose dark and tortuous steps she was tending, were an example; they could scarcely be more badly built, or in a more inconvenient place. Mr. Barney had wanted to remove them, but she would not allow him to incur the expense, because a second removal might be necessary when the house was thoroughly re-arranged. No, she had preferred to submit to the discomfort all this time.

Too long a time it proved, for even while she meditated, an insecure board slipped beneath her feet, plunging her down the dark narrow stairway against the rough stone wall, and then upon the hard floor of the cellar. One swift moment of terror, the crash of the dishes that fell from her hands, a flash of excruciating pain, and then she knew nothing more. She did not hear Nealie's wild cry from the room above, nor see her husband's pale face as he lifted her in his arms.

When she returned to consciousness a strange voice—the physician's—was saying: "No bones broken, though it's a wonder her neck wasn't, falling the way she did."

Slowly she opened her eyes upon a confused mingling of anxious faces, wet cloths, and bottles of arnica and camphor, and gradually she comprehended what had happened, and her own condition,—not dangerously injured, but bruised and lamed, and with a sprained ankle that would keep her a prisoner for some days at least. It was a sudden pause in her busy work—an enforced rest. She scarcely knew how to bear it, for a moment, as she remembered all she had planned to do, until a second shuddering thought suggested that she might have left it all forever; then she grew patient and thankful. Yet it seemed strange to be lying quietly on the lounge in the best bedroom—the room that had been kept so carefully closed to preserve its furniture until an addition to the house should transmute it into a back parlor; to watch through the open door, only a spectator, while Nealie flitted to and fro in the kitchen beyond, spreading the table for tea.

How good the children were that evening, and how tenderly thoughtful her husband was, coming to her side again and again to talk or read to her! They had not found much time for talking or reading together these late years, she and David; she had always been so busy when he was in the house. She had dreamed of a leisure time coming, though, when they should have many evenings like this, except the illness. She had not thought much of illness or accident coming to mar her plans, or of death suddenly ending them. But it flashed upon her now how many little loving words and offices and daily enjoyments had been crowded out of their home, and in that brief retrospective glance she understood the meaning and the earnestness of Sister Searls' entreaty.

"Why, it's all kind of real nice and jolly—if you wasn't hurt," declared Tommy, unable to express his enjoyment of the pretty room and

the unusual family gathering any more clearly.

Tears gathered in the mother's eyes, but she had found her clue; and she meant to follow it. She had ample time for thought in the days that followed, when she was only able to sew a little now and then, on garments for Tim, or look over seeds for Nealie's vine-planting; and slowly but surely she learned her lesson, and brought it back to health with her—to gather life's pleasantness as God sends His sunshine—day by day. —Pacific Evangel.

AN OBJECT-LESSON.

BY CHARLES W. MASON.

On a sultry and suffocating morning in July, a clerk, weary with a year's work, took the train at the Northwestern depot in Chicago, for his two weeks' summer vacation. He passionately loved the earth and the sky; he had not seen the first for a year, and the second only as it may be seen looking up from city streets; and now his mind went forward to the home towards which he would soon be hastening.

A little town, clean and fresh, and dull, straggles along the northern shore of the lake, and in one of its whitest houses, surrounded by the smoothest of green lawns, and the loveliest flowers and graceful vines, the clerk knew he was being eagerly awaited and plenteously prepared for. His heart warmed as he thought of it; but in the light of the freshness, the fragrance, the welcome, towards which he looked, and that he could hold for such a brief time, his every-day life seemed, in the contemplation, dustier, drier, and even less endurable than usual, and in his heart he cried out for "a new servitude."

Why should he, who had no affinity for the city, be fated to grind in one of its mills? He loved the country, and could only once a year catch a passing whiff, as it were, of its fragrance; was sensitive to ridicule and had always to be ready to hear jokes and laughter upon his "pious" tendencies, and could never learn to hear his familiar nickname of "parson" without inward shrinking. If his father had not died, if he had not had to leave college to work for mother and Alice, that is what he would have been—a parson. He had recognized, long ago, that he could never have been a successful one; that was what hurt him more than all the rest, the feeling that he was doing no good. What better was the class of unruly boys at the mission school for his years of conscientious teaching? And as for his fellow clerks he was an unsocial fellow at best, and had no influence over them, he was sure. Long ago, when he had first come among them, he had tried his powers in preaching—on them—had earned his nickname in that way, and they had fairly choked him down with laughter, and a hail-storm of good-natured, stinging jokes; he never thought of that time now, without blushing. His only friend among them all, he believed, was Johnny, the office-boy. Johnny did think a great deal of him; he wondered why! But Johnny was pretty well grounded in the faith now, was almost old enough to have a desk and high-stool of his own, while some other boy filled inkstands and sharpened pencils for him; he would always have an influence; everybody liked the boy's bobbing curly head and merry ways.

But, meanwhile, the clerk's own youth was slipping away, and he longed for a new servitude, knowing even while he longed that he must not stop present work to look about for it. If he could only begin all over again, where nobody knew him, and where he might use the hard-earned experience of these past years to gain influence and do good. This he wished, being blind. He mourned his passing youth, unconscious that it took with it the egotism, the offensive assurance that had drawn laughter upon him, leaving upon his face a look of sweet, settled gravity, that made Johnny love him as if he were a girl, and drew to him all who wanted comfort, as bees go to flowers for honey. Unconscious, too, that his hateful nickname was used now only through strength of habit, and was charged with affectionate respect rather than with derision, the result of years of silent faithfulness. And of course he could not know that his employers looked upon him as one of the reliable kind, a man that they could put their hands on at any time when they wanted a place of special trust filled; and as for the different atmosphere that prevailed in the office now from that when he had first gone into it; the decrease in smoking, chewing, swearing, drinking, and the desire that was beginning to faintly move upon some of the boys for an entire change of life, why, he gave Johnny the credit for that. The little scamp had such a knack with them, nobody could resist his good-natured, grandfatherly lectures upon the error of their ways, and he just badgered them into going to church. They went to get rid of him, they said; but the leaven was working, already the mass was beginning to lift a little, and the clerk, being blind, did not know that his steady holding of