

Family Circle.

A WORD ABOUT HAPPINESS.

TO E. A.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—When Jenny Lind was singing in this country a friend of mine bought a ticket for eleven dollars, which gave him admittance to one of her best performances. He was much more than pleased. He was thrilled with delight. Five years after he told me that he had never purchased so much happiness, with so small an amount of money—that the investment not only paid well at the time, but that it had ever since been yielding compound interest, for he never thought of the joy of that hour without feeling some of it afresh.

I was thinking of this the other day as confirming the view expressed by Sydney Smith, that "mankind are always happier from having been happy, so that if you make them happy now you make them happy twenty years hence, by the memory of it."

Certain am I, that my own life is far happier from having passed a glad, free, childhood, with a twin sister, in the country, amid the wild grandeur of the mountains. How much we all owe to the pleasing experiences and associations of childhood, to

"Those first affections, Those shadowy recollections, Which be they what they may, Are yet the fountain light of all our day."

I, for one, believe in enjoying this life to the very uttermost. I mean, of course, within the limits of right and duty, and not too near that outer line which separates between Christianity and worldliness, and where the temptation to indulge in amusements of doubtful moral propriety becomes doubly strong.

Surely if any one has a right to the rational enjoyment of the good things of this life, which are the gifts of our Heavenly Father, it is the one who seeks to keep "a conscience void of offence," and who labors to live in the faithful discharge of the daily duties, that grow out of the relations he sustains to God and to his fellow-men. It is in the very nature of religion to make him happy here as well as hereafter.

"For godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." I am glad you have found so much enjoyment in reading "Jean Ingelwold's poems." I think with you, that some of them are full of "tenderness and beauty," and there is another word which expresses to my mind, much of them—the word freshness—freshness of language, of style, and of thought, showing that they come from a fresh mind, like gold coins just taken from the mint. And then, what cannot fail to make them dear to good people is, that they have about them, like the poems of Mrs. Browning, the clear ring of an earnest and healthful Christianity.

Do you remember your remark that since you became a Christian, and more especially of late, you seemed to yourself to be living a two-fold life, a life occupied with every day duties, and at the same time an inner, higher life? I doubt not, this is to some extent, the experience of every Christian. What, for instance, did the Psalmist mean, when in the hour of spiritual despondency he came to his own rescue with these words, "Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." Does not the very word "Soliloquy," a talking to one's self, imply in the same person both the speaker and hearer? What a power, and what a source of happiness, thus to be able to address ourselves, and to inspire our own souls with hope in the dark hours of life.

But we ought never to forget that it is the inner and higher life, which is to regulate the outer and lower one, that by looking chiefly to the interests of the former, we secure the best interests of the latter, just as the mariner, who directs his vessel by the light of the stars in the heavens, is more likely to make a straight and safe voyage, than the one who seeks guidance only from what is around him and near him. To live the true spiritual life, we must "walk by faith and not by sight,"—faith in something out of ourselves, and above ourselves, and infinitely greater than ourselves. Ralph Waldo Emerson would say "Hitch your wagon to a Star." But there are others who would say, "Direct your foot-steps by the light of the Star of Bethlehem," that Star which is never to set, and whose light is never to go out.

O, to be united by a strong faith to Him who is "the bright and morning Star;" to love Him with an affection warmer and purer and stronger than that which we cherish for any and for all others, is not this the highest happiness of earth? and does it not constitute the joy of heaven itself?

And if the highest happiness both here and hereafter is to be found in love for Christ, and an obedience to his requirements, and if it be in the very nature of true happiness to augment and perpetuate itself, then how important that we constantly live such a life as shall secure to us this happiness.

"So should we live, that every hour May die as dies the natural flower A self-reviving thing of power."

"That every Thought and every Deed May hold within itself the seed Of future good and future need."

That such a life may be yours is the prayer of Your own true friend, KARNAIM.

LETTERS.

From a Lady visiting Philadelphia, during the Winter of 1863, to her young friend in the Country.

NO. III.

DEAR EDITH:—I have visited various places of public resort since my last letter was written and will speak of some of them before I finish. Truly it is pleasant to hear that I am so greatly missed; indeed I can reciprocate your feelings. Often when I am among strangers, my thoughts revert to my mountain home, and I turn round, almost expecting to meet your kind smile, but all are comparatively unknown; and I repress the emotions that were just ready to unveil themselves to you. So the reading circle has met. It must have required no small degree of perseverance to bring them together punctually. It is a good plan and if properly carried out, will be improving to the members. It will aid to repress that feminine small talk so insidious and injurious to many women.

Now I must give you some account of a lecture I attended the other evening. The lecturer is a literary character of some notoriety. His manner was agreeable and his language good; he seemed to be popular, and was repeatedly encouraged. But I should have liked him much better if he had not manifested a petty kind of spite toward the clergy as a class. He rather went out of his way to gratify his envy in this respect. I say envy, as this trait no doubt, was at the root of the feelings expressed. But I must pass on to other topics and speak of lectures more fully, when I have heard more extensively. I have been out every night this week but one, and do not feel very bright.

Was it not rather tyrannical in you to make me promise to write a page or two before retiring? that you might have the benefit of my observations while impressions were lively. There is one evil resulting from your plan, my letters are scarcely legible. You know I am a rapid writer; and I allow myself less than an hour to dot down these impressions for you. I have been at a concert since I wrote; it was a rare treat to me; nothing since I arrived has afforded me more real enjoyment. I can speak of the pieces when we meet; writing is tame in describing music. The ladies are very gay in concert dress. I did not admire the appearance of some who occupied conspicuous seats near us. Glaring colors are my aversion; they evince a want of taste. Some young girls near us amused themselves by constant whispering. It was very annoying; my friends seemed vexed, and looked at them two or three times, but without any effect. You may remember I did not intend to omit my reading for one day. I have now been here more than a month, and have not read on an average more than half the time. But if I were a resident of the city I could be more systematic in the arrangement of my time; now, every one I meet, seems to have an interest in helping me to dispose of it. It will amuse you if I mention one feature of city life that has rather surprised me; the fact mentioned, you can draw the inference for yourself. Ladies here are not contented to be extravagant in dress but it is the custom to publish it generally. Silks, laces, furs and jewelry are priced and the cost freely told to strangers, with the names of the fortunate possessors; and if any doubt is manifested by the listener, your informant will tell you (with a conscious expression of pride in her superior opportunities,) I know it to be a fact; Mrs. T. or Miss S. (as the case may be) told me herself. Why it is so I cannot discuss now; but the fact is indubitable. Wardrobes are priced and ticketed as material for conversation. The robe that was ugly beyond endurance, when the price is named becomes beautiful, the cost being the standard of taste.

A short sketch of my visit to the "Academy of Fine Arts" will interest you; a full description I must defer until we meet. There are some beautiful paintings to be seen there and also a few really fine pieces of sculpture. "Hero and Leander" you have seen, so that I need not take up the time in describing that beautiful work. I do not consider myself capable of criticising works of art; yet as every one who admires them strongly must have an opinion, I may speak of some you have not seen. There are two faces in marble that impressed me so vividly that I could think of nothing

else for a time "Spring," is the bust of a young girl with a most beautiful face; fitting emblem of that lovely season that brings birds and flowers to gladden the young and cheer the aged. The countenance indicates a happy heart, and the whole expression is so attractive that it compels the eye to rest until satisfied, that memory can bring up that face at will. I intended passing through to another room; but this face arrested my footsteps as effectually as if I had been addressed. The other is an "Alto rilievo," entitled "Grief." A sad and wonderfully expressive countenance; and were it not for the heavy appearance of the hair, it would be a true exposition of the young artist's idea. The mass of disheveled locks overshadows the face entirely; the mind is disturbed in its efforts to grasp the idea of the artist. There is not room now to speak of the paintings as I wish to say a few words on other topics.

I am glad to hear that you are so deeply interested in my inquiries, as regards the mental progress of the young ladies here. I am gaining an insight on that point, in which the observations of Mr. B. will greatly aid me. I have only seen him once since, and that was during a call he made on Aunt Helen rather late in the evening. As he found company here, there was no opportunity to resume the subject that interests me. But as he said good evening, he observed that we had yet to finish the discussion commenced at Mrs. L.'s; adding that he feared I thought him severe. "No," I replied, "I feel, on the contrary, obliged by your candor." Let me hear from you soon, and do not send me a short letter. Yours with love, HELEN.

THE AVALANOE.

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.

"Open the window, Rene, my dear son," said the grandmother with a faint voice. "The sun shines beautifully in the valley, and the air must be soft and mild. I long for a breath of fresh air."

"I will gladly do anything you say, grandmother, dear; but that ugly cough of yours? The air is not so mild as you think; the wind blows cold enough from the mountains."

The grandmother smiled faintly, and raised herself a little in the bed. "You need not be afraid, my dear boy," said she. "I feel that my end is near; nothing can do me much harm just now. Open the window! My chest feels oppressed; my heart beats slowly, and as if something was trying to stop it. Rene, dearest child! my old eyes will not see much more sunlight upon earth. I feel that they will soon—very soon—be closed forever. You will be glad, my darling, that you no longer have to watch over and wait upon a poor helpless old woman, who can be nothing but a burden to you."

"Grandmother! Oh dear grandmother! don't talk so!" exclaimed the boy, bursting into tears and kneeling beside the bed. The exhausted old woman put out her hand; he clasped it in both of his. "You break my heart when you talk so. You know I love you dearly, grandmother; don't you? Oh, no, no! you will live a good while yet, to let me show you how much I love you!"

Old Greta looked into the fresh, open, honest face of the handsome boy, who had just completed his twelfth year. It was the freshness and open honesty of look that made him handsome. "Not for a world, my dear boy," said she, "would I distress you. How could I after the years of true and loving care that you have given me? But I feel—I feel sure—I can't tell why or how—but I feel sure that my end is near; and who will take care of you, my boy, when I am gone? But I do wrong to ask that; God will. I have prayed for you, Rene—prayed earnestly—and I know that God has heard me. Don't cry, my child! Dry up your tears. You have comforted my declining years; don't embitter my last moments."

The child tried to choke down his sobs. "But I can't quite help it, grandmother. When you are gone, I shall be all alone; not one in the whole world to love me! And I do love you so much!"

"No, no, dear child," said the old woman, "not all alone. You have a Father up in Heaven. Give Him your heart, my son. Raise your eyes and your hands to Him, and you will soon find that you are not forsaken. Be honest, truthful, and industrious, as you have always been, and His eye will look upon you in love. He will bless, guard, and keep you. Now open the window, my son."

Rene got up and did as he was told. Cool and refreshing, the wind from the Alps blew into the room, and seemed to breathe new life into that old and feeble frame. She inhaled it with delight.

"Oh, how delightful it is, Rene!" said she with a faint smile. "Now draw back the ivy branches that hang before the window. I want to take one more look at my dear native valley. Oh, how beautiful the dear God has made it! See!" and she pointed out to him the snow upon the mountains glittering in the sunshine, the broad ice-fields upon their sides, the rushing, roaring river that poured down the cleft, the sun-tipped summit of Mt. Blanc, towering above all, and the flocks feeding so peacefully beside the wild streams. At last she drew her breath. "That's enough," said she. "Now bring the stool and sit here beside me." The boy obeyed.

Taking his hand in hers, she told him that she was dying; that her death would leave him alone; and she wanted

him to promise that, all his life long, he would keep God before his eyes, try as far as he was able to obey all His commands, and to do nothing contrary to them. The boy promised, and added, as the tears rolled down his cheeks: "And I will never forget, dear grandmother, what you have taught me."

"I hope not, I hope not," said old Greta earnestly. "And remember, Rene, God has heard your promise now. Don't forget my dying words!"

"Oh, no, no! not dying!" exclaimed Rene in alarm. "You will not die yet, grandmother!"

"Very soon, very soon, my child," said she feebly, and even as she spoke, she sank back pale and exhausted upon her pillow. "God bless you. I can say—no more. God—"

The words died upon her lips, her eyes closed, and she breathed so faintly that Rene thought she was gone. Sobbing aloud, he dropped on his knees beside the bed, took her old and wrinkled hand, and covered it with tears and kisses. But suddenly, with a strength that was supernatural, she sat erect, and in a clear firm tone cried out; "Boy! Rene! my child! Fly! There is danger at hand! A cloud is hanging over our house! Danger is approaching. Fly! fly! I hear thunder in the mountains! Hark! a crash, too! It is coming nearer! Quick! Fly! fly! or you are lost! God help you! my child, my child!"

Wondering and astonished the boy sprang to his feet. A new hope filled his heart—his grandmother had received new strength. Poor child! it was but for a moment. One look of unutterable love, one smile, and again she closed her eyes as she sank back upon her pillow. She was dead; he could no longer doubt.

The child was now, as he himself had said, "alone in the world." His parents had died long before, and he had not, as far as he knew, a relative on the earth. He sat down on the side of the bed, the tears rolling down his cheeks, and the last words of his grandmother passing through his mind. Then he got up to go to the pastor of the village church—the father as well as the minister of his people. He must ask his help to bury the dead. But his steps were arrested by a strange sound—a fearful roll of thunder among the mountains. Then there came a crash—a crash that shook the hut, and made the window-frame rattle. Then the sun was darkened by a storm cloud that rolled down the side of the mountains, and there came a thick darkness over the whole valley. Nearer, nearer, thunder, and crash, and darkness, and storm-cloud, all came on together.

"An avalanche!" exclaimed the terrified child, clasping his hands. "Dear God, save me! Dear, dear grandmother! that was what you were warning me of! You heard it coming! How strange! God take care of me! I cannot fly now!"

Louder and yet more fearful came the mighty mass of snow in its thundering leap. He heard it approach; he heard the roof crash beneath it; he heard the glass splinter into fragments; gave one cry, and, paralyzed with fear, fell senseless upon the floor.

It must have been for hours that he lay there; when he opened his eyes he was in thick darkness, and everything was still as death. He could not see, but he humbly thanked God that he lived. "How strange!" he murmured. "What a mercy it is that I am saved! the roof crushed in, everything about me crushed and broken, and I saved! Ah! you dear, good grandmother! It was for your prayers for me that the good God did it!"

Raising himself, he felt around him as far his hand would reach; but all was a mass of ruin. The broken roof, the fallen rafters had formed a sort of shed over him, which kept off the snow. He felt his way to the bed. He took the cold hand of his grandmother, kissed it, and then lay down on the floor beside her, for the whole room was clear of snow. He said to himself:—"Well, if I must die here, it will be with her; and if the good people of the village—if any of them are left—ever come to look for us they will put us both in the same grave. That will be a comfort."

He was not at all frightened or anxious. He thought quietly over the past, and made plans for the future, if he should get out. Most strange of all, it seemed to him, that his grandmother should have known of its coming so long before, for it was nearly an hour. "Truly," he thought, "it is even as the good pastor said the other day:—'The dying see things we do not dream of.' And she warned me, too! Dear, good grandmother! But I didn't understand her, so it was of no use. Maybe God will make the neighbors think of me, and come to help me—that is, if the avalanche has not buried them all."

Again he lay still for a long, long time; then he began to feel hungry. He groped his way to the place where the cupboard had stood; it was shattered, and so was everything in it; but he found a bit of bread and a jug of milk. With these he refreshed himself, then went back and lay down on the floor again beside the bed. Soon he fell asleep, and slept as peacefully as though nothing had happened.

He was awakened by a tumult over his head. "There!" said he, after listening a moment, "the neighbors have come to help me. I thought they would! Grandmother said that God would never leave me in trouble. Oh, I am so glad! Now she will have a decent grave!" The noise over his head increased; soon he heard voices. Then he heard the clergyman say:—"Here it is, my children. We have hit on the right

spot. See, here are the rafters. Now, courage! Perhaps we may find the living."

"Yes, sir!" cried the little boy, as loudly as he could, "God has saved me! I am not even hurt!" A cry of joy rang through the air.

"Quick, my friends, quick!" said the good pastor, eagerly. "That was Rene's voice! Noble boy! God be thanked for this blessing on our work!"

The men redoubled their toil. Snow and rubbish were thrown aside, and a ray of light soon streamed in upon the child. A moment more, and he sprang into the extended arms of the dear old pastor.

"Oh, thank you! thank you all!" said he. "I wasn't at all afraid. I knew you would come as soon as you could."

"But your grandmother, Rene?" asked the pastor. "Is she killed?" "No, sir," said the boy. "Not by the avalanche. She died a little before it came. I was just coming to you when it stopped me. My dear, dear grandmother! All help is too late for her!"

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