

The Family Circle.

THE RETURN.

"Three years! I wonder if she'll know me! I limp a little, and I left one arm at Petersburg, and I am grown as brown as the plump chestnuts on my little farm; and I am as shaggy as the chestnut burrs, but ripe and sweet within, and wholly hers. "The darling! how I long to see her! My heart outruns this feeble soldier pace; For I remember, after I had left, A little Charlie came to take my place; Ah! how the laughing, three-year-old brown eyes (His mother's eyes) will stare with pleased surprise!

"Sure, they'll be at the corner watching! I sent them word that I should come to-night; The birds all knew it, for they crowd around, Twitting their welcome with a wild delight; And that old robin with a halting wing— I saved her life three years ago last spring. "Three years—perhaps I am but dreaming, For, like the pilgrim of the long ago, I've tugged a weary burden at my back, Through summer's heat and winter's blinding snow, Till now, I reach my home, my darling's breast, There I can roll my burden off—and rest."

THE WIFE OF CALVIN.

There was in Strasbourg a pious lady named Idelette de Bure. She was a widow, and all her time was spent in training the children she had by her first husband, John Storder, of the Anabaptist sect. She was born in a small town of Guelders, in Holland. She came to the capital of Alsace as a place of refuge for victims of persecution. The learned Dr Bucer knew Idelette de Bure, and it was he, apparently, who recommended her to Calvin's attention.

Externally, there was in this woman nothing very attractive. She was encumbered with several children of a first marriage; she had no fortune; she was dressed in mourning; her person was not particularly handsome. But for Calvin she possessed the best of treasures, a living and tried faith, an upright conscience, and lovely as well as strong virtues. As he afterwards said of her, she would have the courage to bear with him exile, poverty, death itself, in attestation of the truth. Such were the noble qualities which won the Reformer.

The nuptial ceremony was performed in September, 1540. Calvin was then thirty-one years and two months old. He was not constrained by juvenile passion, but obeyed the voice of nature, reason and duty. The Papists, who constantly reproach the Reformers, are mistaken. Luther and Calvin, both of them, married at mature age; they did what they ought to do, and nothing more.

On the 13th of September, 1541, he returned, after an exile of three years, to the city of Geneva, the face and the destinies of which he changed.

Before fixing his residence definitely in Geneva, Calvin had determined to go there, and examine for himself the true state of things. He went alone, leaving his wife in Strasbourg. But he had no sooner entered the walls of the city, than the Genevese, fearing to lose once more a man of whom they stood so much in need, took all proper measures to detain him. The public Councils decided that a "messenger of State" should be sent to Idelette at Strasbourg, and should bring her "with her household" (these were the terms of the resolution) into the house assigned for the Reformer. Thus did this humble Christian woman receive honors decreed to a princess of royal blood, having a messenger of State to guide and usher her into her new dwelling.

In spite of the honors which were accorded by the political councils of Geneva, Idelette de Bure was not ambitious to play a brilliant part in society. Always modest and reserved, practising the virtues which suited her sex, and shunning noise and pomp with as much solicitude as other women seek them, she consecrated her days to the duties of her pious vocation. Her private correspondence with Calvin—on the rare occasions when he mentions his wife—makes us see her under a very engaging aspect. She visited the poor; consoled the afflicted, and received with hospitality the numerous strangers who came without knocking at the gate of the Reformer. In fact, every one recognized her in the pious woman, of whom it is said in the Scripture, that she had "a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," and was worthy to be praised for ever for her works.

Idelette de Bure devoted herself particularly to the care of her husband. Exhausted by his constant labors, Calvin was frequently ill; and treating his body roughly after the example of Paul, he persisted amidst bodily sufferings in performing the multiplied duties of his office. Then his wife would come and tenderly recommend him to take a little repose, and watch at his pillow, when his illness had assumed an alarming character. Besides (and this will surprise the reader), Calvin had at times, like ordinary men, desponding feelings; he was inclined to "low spirits." "Sometimes," he himself says, "although I am well in body, I am depressed with grief, which prevents me from doing anything, and I am ashamed to live so uselessly.

In these moments of dejection, when the heroic Reformer seemed, in spite of his energy and incomparable activity, to sink under the weight of our common infirmities, Idelette de Bure was at hand with tender and encouraging words, which the heart of woman can alone find; and her hand, so feeble, yet so welcome and so affectionate, restored the giant of the Reformation, who made the Pope and kings tremble on their thrones! O, the precious support and the magic power, of a religious, attentive, and loving wife!

Who can picture the salutary influence which the humble Idelette de Bure exercised over the Reformer? Calvin was often pained by the opposition he met with, for men submit reluctantly to the designs of genius. How in these years of struggle and of secret weaknesses, which his correspondence reveals, did he become composed before the courageous and sweet woman, who could make no compromise with duty? How many times, perhaps, he was soothed and quieted by one of those words which come from the heart! . . . And when afterwards more gloomy days arrived, and the strife of opinions called forth Boleac, Michael Servetus, Gentilis, (Idelette de Bure was no longer alive), who can say how much the Reformer missed the advice, the sweet influence of this woman?

To return to our narrative: Idelette's greatest pleasure was to listen to the holy exhortations of Farel, Peter Viret, Theodore Beza, who often sat at the hospitable table of their illustrious chief, and loved to renew their courage in converse with him. Sometimes, but rarely, she accompanied her husband in his walks to Coligny, to Bell-Rive, and on the enchanting banks of Lake Leman. At other times, in order to repose after her fatigues, or when Calvin was called away to attend to the business of the Reformed churches, Idelette would go and spend some days at Lausanne, with the wife of Viret. We see her in this Christian family in 1545 and 1548, careful not to give trouble to her hosts, and troubled because she could not render them some good offices in return for those which they had shown her.

Bitter and domestic afflictions came upon Calvin and his wife. The second year of their marriage, in the month of July, 1542, Idelette had a son. But, alas! this child, for whom they had devotedly returned thanks to God, and offered so many fervent prayers, was soon taken from them by death. The churches of Geneva and Lausanne showed the parents marks of sympathy. Feeble mitigation of so heavy a trial! It is easier to imagine than to express the grief of a mother's heart. Calvin lets us see his sorrow and that of his companion, in a letter addressed the 10th August, 1542, to Peter Viret: "Salute all our brethren," says he; "salute also your wife, to whom mine presents her thanks for her tender and pious consolations. . . . She would like to answer them with her own hand, but she has not even the strength to dictate a few words. The Lord has dealt us a grievous blow in taking from us our son; but he is our Father, and knows what is meet for his children." Paternal affection and Christian resignation are both displayed in Calvin's letters at this time. In 1544, a new trial of this kind afflicted the hearts of these parents. A daughter was born to them; she lived only a few days, as we see in a letter addressed in 1544 to the pastor Viret. Again, a third child was taken from them. Idelette wept bitterly; and Calvin, so often tried, sought his strength from the Lord; and the thought occurred to him that he was destined only to have children "according to the faith." So he said to one of his adversaries, who had been base enough to reproach him with his domestic losses: "Yes," replied Calvin, "the Lord has given me a son; he has taken him from me. Let my enemies, if they see proper, reproach me for this trial. Have I not thousands of children in the Christian world?"

The health of Idelette, already delicate, was impaired by these repeated griefs. The familiar letters of the Reformer inform us that she passed her last years in a state of languor and suffering. Often he speaks of her as sick in bed, and asks the prayers of her friends. Often he tells how she has revived. Calvin's affection for his wife appears in these communications: "Salute your wife," he writes to Viret in 1548; "mine is her sad companion in bodily weakness. I fear the issue. Is there not enough evil threatening us at the present time? The Lord will perhaps show a more favorable countenance."

There was then at Geneva a learned physician named Benedict Taxtor. He was a pious man, full of zeal for the Lord, and a particular friend of Calvin. He was assiduous in his care of Idelette, and exhausted himself in seeking all the aid that human art could afford. But his efforts were fruitless: the fever increased. Calvin felt for the physician deep gratitude, and addressed him, in the month of July 1550, a letter dedicating to him his Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Early in April, 1549, Idelette's condition inspired deep anxiety. Theodore Beza, Hottman, Desgalliers, and other colleagues of the Reformer, hastened to him to console him, as well as his wife, in her last illness. Idelette—sustained by piety even to the end—

had consented to the sundering of her earthly ties; her only anxiety was concerning the fate of the children she had by her first marriage. One of her friends advised her to speak of them to Calvin. "Why should I do so?" she answered; what concerns me is that my children may be brought up in virtue. . . . If they are virtuous, they will find in him a father; if they are not, why should I recommend them to him?" But Calvin himself knew her wishes, and promised to treat her children as if they were his own. "I have already recommended them to God," said Idelette. "But that does not hinder that I should take care of them also," said Calvin. "I know well," said she, "that you will never abandon those whom I have confided to the Lord."

Idelette saw the approach of death with calmness. Her soul was unshaken in the midst of her sufferings, which were accompanied by frequent faintings. When she could not speak, her look, her gestures, the expression of her face, revealed sufficiently the faith which strengthened her in her last hour. On the morning of April 6th, a pastor named Bourgoin addressed her in pious exhortation. She joined in broken exclamations, which seemed an anticipation of Heaven:—"O glorious resurrection! O God of Abraham and our fathers! . . . hope of Christians for so many ages, in thee I hope!"

At seven o'clock in the morning she faintly again; and feeling that her voice was about to fail, "Pray," said she; "O, my friends, pray for me!" Calvin approaching her bedside, she showed her joy by her looks. With emotion, he spoke to her of the grace that is in Christ—of the earthly pilgrimage—of the assurance of a blessed eternity; and closed by a fervent prayer. Idelette followed his words; listened attentively to the holy doctrine of salvation in Jesus crucified. About nine o'clock she breathed her last sigh, but so peacefully that it was for some moments impossible to discover if she ceased to live or if she was asleep.

Such is the account Calvin gives to his colleagues of the death of his beloved wife. Then he turned sadly his eyes upon his now desolate state of widowhood. "I have lost," he said to Viret, in a letter of April 7th, 1549, "I have lost the excellent companion of my life, who never would have left me in exile, nor in pain, nor in death. So long as she lived, she was a precious help to me; never occupied with herself, and never being to her husband a trouble or a hindrance. . . . I suppress my grief as much as I can; my friends make it their duty to console me; but they and myself effect little. You know the tenderness of my heart; not to say its weakness. I should succumb, if I did not make an effort over myself to moderate my affliction." Four days after, he wrote to his old friend Farel: "Adieu, dear and beloved brother; may God direct you by his spirit, and support me in my trial. I could not have borne this blow, if God had not extended his hand from Heaven. It is he who raises the desponding soul; who consoles the broken heart; who strengthens the feeble kness."

BUYING GOLD MAKES ONE A REBEL.

There is instruction and example in the following incident narrated to us by a Pennsylvania friend:

An honest Schuykill County German merchant, who had been prospered and had accumulated more money than he could employ as capital in his business, came to a patriotic banker in Philadelphia and said: "I have got some moneys, and I want you to buy me some gold."

"Why, Schultz, what do you want gold for? That isn't a thing you sell in your store."

"I know dat, but I want to make some money on de rise of gold. Beople say it is going up, and I tink I may make a thousand dollars."

"Schultz, you dear old fellow, don't you know that if you buy gold you will be a rebel?"

"No!" said Schultz, with a tone of resentment in his wonder.

"Suppose you buy \$10,000 of gold. Suppose that some morning you read in the papers in big letters: 'Terrible disaster to the Union cause! Grant's army routed and destroyed! The rebels marching on Washington!'"

"I should say dat was pad news," excitedly interrupted the German.

SACRED LYRICS.

THE HOUR OF PRAYER. Blest is the sacred hour of prayer, When Christian pilgrims, tired and faint, Can pour into their Father's ear Their supplication and their plaint. How sweet to know we have a Friend Who sympathizes in each care— Who can and will assistance lend, In answer to believing prayer. Sweet is the lonely hour of prayer The Christian in his closet spends; For, when the Father hears him there, A shower of blessings soon descends. The Christian cannot pray in vain While faith in Jesus fills his heart; The good he asks he must obtain, Or God must from His word depart!

THE LAUGH CHANGED.

It is rarely wise for a young convert to conceal his feelings, even if exposed to bitter opposition. It troubles his conscience and weakens his courage not to testify for Christ. It is far nobler to fling out your new colors, and walk under them quietly but firmly. The following incident is in point:

A chaplain-general once related an incident of a young soldier who, on one occasion, had consulted him on a question of Christian duty.

"Last night," said the young man, "in my barracks, before getting into bed, I knelt down and prayed in a low voice, when suddenly my comrades began to throw their boots at me, and raised a great laugh."

"Well," replied the chaplain, "but suppose you defer your prayer till you get into bed, and then silently lift up your heart to God."

A week or two afterwards the young soldier called again. "Well," said the chaplain, "you took my advice, I suppose; how has it answered?"

"Sir," he answered, "I did take your advice for one or two nights; but I began to think it looked rather like denying my Saviour, and I once more knelt at my bedside, and prayed in a low whisper as before."

"And what followed?"

"Not one of them laughs now, sir; the whole fifteen knelt and pray too!"

"I felt ashamed," said the chaplain, in narrating the story, "of the advice I had given him; that young man was both wiser and bolder than myself."

THE BOY AND THE BEE.

Little Johnny was just three years old. Of course, he had seen very little of the world, and had very much to learn. So one warm, bright afternoon, while playing in the garden, he took a lesson which he remembers yet.

In the rich, green grass, a bright yellow dandelion caught his eye, but he did not notice a singular looking spot about the middle of the flower. That spot was nothing less than a merry honey bee, who had come singing along through the air in search of honey and wax, and stopped to see if that flower had any for him. Quick as thought, down went the little fat hand, and back again it came as quickly, bringing in its grasp flower, bee, and all.

The poor bee was very much surprised at this sudden change. He thought that the sky or something else, had fallen on him. But whatsoever might have been the case, he was resolved not to give up his life without a trial, and so, twisting his little body round, he sent up his sharp, poisoned sting deep into Johnny's hand! And didn't nurse hear a scream from Johnny's lungs? And while she ran to aid the suffering child, the bee gathered himself up and set out for home, wondering what in the world such little, two-legged pests as boys were made for.

But the sting had not only marked Johnny's hand, but had written this lesson in his memory—that sometimes very pretty things have very sharp stings. Wine looks very pretty in the glass; but the Bible says that if we become fond of drinking it, it will "bite like a serpent and sting like an adder."

Sin often looks very inviting, but the Bible tells us that "the sting of death is sin."

A little boy once asked his mother for a peach. She asked him if he had not already eaten one. To get another he told a lie and said, "No." But after he went to bed that he stung him so that he was afraid to go to sleep till he had called his mother, confessed his sin, and asked her pardon.

I hope my young readers will remember that sometimes very pretty things have very sharp stings.—Child's Own Magazine.

HOW TO SETTLE DISPUTES.

"My father was an officer in the army, and he thought the best way to settle every thing was by fighting. If a boy ever gave me a saucy word, he would say to me, 'Fight him, Charley, fight him.'"

and I with the rest, got into a difficulty with one of the teachers, and somehow or other we got the notion that Tom Tucker was at the bottom of it.

"This made me very mad," Tom Tucker, who is he? I cried in anger. "I'll let him know who I am," so we rattled on till we all got into a rage. Then the boys set me on to go down to Tom Tucker's and give him a thrashing. Swelling with anger, I bolted into Tom's yard. There he was, playing with his little sister and their dog Trip. Marching straight up to him, I bawled out: 'I'll teach you how to talk about me in this way, Mr. Tom Tell-tale!'

"Tom never winced, or seemed the least frightened, but stood looking at me as mild and gentle as a lamb. "Tell me," I cried, throwing down my books, doubling my fist, and sliding up to him; 'tell me, or I'll kill you,' I was going to say, for murder was in my heart, Tom stepped aside, and said in a firm yet mild tone: 'Charles, you may strike as much as you please; I tell you I shan't strike back again. Fighting is a poor way to settle difficulties. When you are yourself, I will talk with you.'

"Oh! what an answer that was! How it cowed me down! So firm and yet so mild! I felt there was no fun in having the fight all one side. I was ashamed of myself—my foolish, wicked temper. I longed to get out of his sight. I saw what a poor, foolish way my way of doing things was. I felt that Tom had got the better of me completely; and from that hour Tom Tucker had an influence over me which nobody else had before or has had since. And all that was done by the power of a gentle spirit."

EARLY INFLUENCES.

The mother of Rev. Spencer W. Cone, D. D., always persuaded herself that God had some special work in the world for her boy to do; that He had sent him into the world to carry out some not unworthy, and perhaps noble, part of His great plan of providence; and that in His own good time and way He would bring him out and set him in a sure place.

Under this conviction, she watched her boy daily, to catch the first dawn of intellect, the very opening of the mind, and, if it might be, endow his earliest purposes with holy thoughts and words. Every occasion was seized, every occurrence improved, with an eye single to that future she believed so firmly to be destined for him, persuaded that in that she had an eye single to the glory of God. And it was in that elevated feeling that she began to teach him, investing even the common lessons of honesty and truth with the charm of Christian heroism. For it happened one day, when he was about five years old, that some drovers, reaching their place about night-fall, were obliged to put up their cattle in the sheds, and tarry with them until next morning. When the morning came, they got their cattle together again, mounted their horses, and went upon their way. That day, as Spencer was playing in the barn, he found a dollar—a real silver dollar; and silver dollars then were not common coin. War, and a depreciated paper currency, had raised them to an almost fabulous value. Spencer thought that he was a made man for life; that he had found an inexhaustible mine of wealth. So he ran to his mother to show her his dollar.

"Your dollar, Spencer?" said she. "Where did you get it?"

"O, I found it in the straw, and it's mine."

"Not so fast, my son; let us think of that a little. Silver dollars do not grow in the straw?"

"No, mother."

"Then, my son, somebody must have put it there, or somebody must have lost it there."

"Yes, mother," said the boy; "I never thought of that."

"And more than that," said his mother, drawing him to her, "if we do not know who put it there, God knows. If we do not know who lost it, God knows. And besides, Spencer, if you had had a silver dollar, and had been so careless or so unfortunate as to lose it, would you not feel very sorry, and would you not hope that whoever found it would try and find out to whom it belonged, and if he heard it was yours, bring it back to you?"

"O, yes, indeed!" he cried, earnestly.

"Well, then," said the mother, winding her arms about him, "you and I will ask God to help us to find out whom this money belonged to, and to put it into our hearts to always try and do unto others even as we would that they should do unto us."

And the little boy prayed well-nigh as fervently as the Christian mother, for the guidance and direction of their heavenly Father. It was quite a year after, before the drovers came that way again; but the first thing Spencer did was to run out amongst them, with the silver dollar in his hand, to tell them how he had found it in the barn, after they had gone away, and beg them to try and remember which of them had lost it. So the old fellows laid their heads together, and although they would have liked to smile at the child's earnestness, refrained, out of wise respect for the principle of the thing, and pretended to try very hard to discover the loser. But when they could not, after much questioning, fix

upon any one of them as the man they very gravely discussed the question of whose property it should be, and finally resolved unanimously that Spencer should keep it as a reward for his honesty; or, rather, because he had kept it so long and well, and taken such pains to discover the true owner.

THE FAKIR AND HIS BIRD.

[FROM THE ARABIC.] "Aish min tire hatha jameel." A Fakir fed his gorgeous bird, With lotus-leaf and dew, And when its purple pinions stirred, Some mystic sign he drew: On shoulder perched he went with it, From Yemen to the Nile, To see old Egypt's sunbeam fit, Awakening Memnon's smile.

It sang a trill, the beetle heard, And merged from the slime. The cadence all his being stirred, With ecstasy sublime. The slough he cast, and in the beam, His golden crest was high, The dew he sipped, the lotus cropped, Beneath the bird's bright eye.

"Angel of mine?" the Fakir cries, "The beetle, like my race, Is lost in mire and slough of vice, Alien from truth and grace: But seraph-voices heard from heaven, Allure him from the dead, And with celestial ment, His living soul is fed."

—Rev. Edward Jones.

MEETING AT THE TAP.

A hundred years ago and more, a numerous body of Presbyterians, who had seceded from the Established Church of Scotland, was split in two on a quarrel about a clause in the oath required of the freemen of certain Scottish boroughs, which expressed "their hearty allowance of the true religion at present professed within the realms, and authorized by the laws thereof." The party who held that the oath might be conscientiously taken by seceders were called "Burghers," and their opponents "Anti-burghers," Johnny Morton, a keen Burgher, and Andrew Gebbie, a decided Anti-burgher, both lived in the same house, but at opposite ends, and it was the bargain that each should keep his own side of the house well thatched. When the dispute about the principles of their kirks, and especially the offensive clause in the oath, grew hot, the two neighbors ceased to speak to each other.

But one day they happened to be on the roof at the same time, each repairing the thatch in the slope of the roof on his own side, and when they had worked up to the top, there they were—face to face. They couldn't flee, so at last Andrew took off his cap, and, scratching his head, said: "Johnnie, you and me, I think, have been very foolish to dispute, as we have done, concerning Christ's will about our kirks, until we have clean forgot His will about ourselves; and so we have fought sae bitterly for what we ca' the truth, that it has ended in spite. Whatever's wrang, it's perfectly certain that it never can be right to be uncivil, unneighborly, unkind, in fact, ta' hate ane another. Na, na, that's the deevil's wark, and no God's. Noo, it strikes me that maybe it's wi' the kirks as I'm this house; ye're working on ae side and me on the t'ither, but if we only do our wark weel, we will meet at the tap at last. Gie's your han', auld neighbor!" And so they shook han', and were the best of freens ever after.

THE "LIVE" TEACHER.

This term "live," though somewhat hacknied, is very expressive, and so easily understood, that it is difficult to find another to replace it. All comprehend what is meant by a live man, a live tree, in contradistinction to a dead man, a dead tree. Would that we had in our schools more who felt the importance of demonstrating, by their own efforts, the full import of a "live" Sabbath-school teacher. To what should he be alive? To the fearful responsibilities assumed by him, to the fact that upon his faithfulness may depend the salvation of the souls committed to his care. Can you, dear teacher, present yourself before your class and not feel almost crushed under the burden that is upon you? If one soul is worth more than a world, at what price do you value all those who are providentially placed in your hands? To-day, it may be, is the last opportunity you may have to impress the truth upon the hearts and consciences of your scholars. Some may pass from under your care before another Sabbath, by death or by removal. Can you fail, then, to do your utmost to fix the truth in their minds? Some of your number may be anxious to hear from you of the love of the Saviour, of his willingness to take them in his arms and bless them. They know that Christ died for the world, but they would like to have you tell them that he died for them. They may be indifferent to spiritual things, and your mission to-day is to remove this indifference. Shake off, then, dear teacher, the stupor that is upon you, lest when the Master calls you may not be ready to respond, "Here am I, and the soul thou hast given me." While you sleep the enemy is awake, and is sowing tares in soil that should be sacred to the "good seed of the kingdom."

I am sometimes amazed at the apathy of teachers. Their responsibilities set as lightly on their consciences as a summer garment on their shoulders. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead."—S. S. Times.