

The Family Circle.

THE ANGEL'S PORTION.

A CHRISTMAS LYRIC.

The Finland Christmas moon was cold; A peasant trudged across the world; Behind his back the town-dog's bay fainter and fainter died away; Till naught upon his ear there fell Till catamountain's hungry yell.

Through snow he urged his heavy feet, For wife and bairns he longed to greet; In naked hut they made their bed, And birchwood bark was half their bread. But now a festive treat he bore, The bounty of a rich man's door.

The drifted snow he skirted round: What sees he, crouching on the ground? Dumb with the cold, a childish form, Blowing its hands to keep them warm; And, lit by gleaming snow alone, Half changed it seems to glistly stone.

"What brought thee here, poor lad?" quoth he; "Thou' must go warm thyself with me." His arms upheld the frozen weight; He reached at length his homestead gate; And deemed he entered, doubly blest, With cheering food and starving guest.

The comfort of his days was there; Thy youngest at her breast she bare; Long hast thou tramped about the snow: Come where the hearth is all aglow! And thou the same!" like mother mild She welcomed in the outcast child.

And soon, beneath her busy hand, A brighter life was in the brand; She thought of grinding wheat no more; So pleased she took her husband's store, And spread it out for supperside. With scanty bowl of milk beside.

From scattered straw upon the ground, The children crossed the narrow bound; 'Twixt bed and board, a merry pack; Only the stranger boy hung back; The mother forward drew her guest, And found him room among the rest.

And, when an evening glow was said, She shared around the festive bread; The boy returned a soft reply, Breaking the crust; and in his eye, The while he spoke, a tear there stood: "Blest are the offerings of the good!"

With bread in hand she stood, prepared To share herself, as she had shared; But, at that solemn tone, amazed, Upon her tender guest she gazed, And looked and wondered more and more— He seemed no longer as before.

His eyes were like the stars of light, His cheeks were glowing, rosy bright; The rage of earth away were borne, Like mist before the breath of morn: It was an angel, smiling there, And fair as only heaven is fair.

Beamed brighter still the seraph boy; Beat every heart with his joy; Long to the peasants' hut may cleave The memory of that Christmas Eve; For nobler board was never dressed— The angel staid to be their guest.

It chanced, when many a year had fled, One Christmas Eve I reached the shed: The good folk's hearth was still the same; But, seated in its glowing flame, With early winter on his brow, Their grandson was the father now.

'Twas all so glad; 'twas all so good; His gentle mate, his ruddy brood; 'Twas all as though on every face There lay the calm of evening grace; 'Twas all as though indeed they felt That in a hallowed home they dwelt.

High on the board one taper light (Their only one) was burning bright; And milk and wheaten bread was there; But no one touched that daintier fare: I asked whose portion yonder lay— "Tis the good angel's!" answered they.

[From the Swedish of J. L. Runeberg.]

BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM.

The church clock in a small country town had just struck four, when the door of the principal boys' school was burst open, and out rushed the children, with even more than their usual noise and commotion.

The day had been a glorious one, and the bright summer sunshine had roused visions of green woods and clear sparkling brooklets, which had made some young spirits chafe under the restraint of the schoolroom, so that, now the hour of freedom had come, it was welcomed with unusual joy. In a few minutes the noise abated, and the boys set off homewards, some here, some there.

Two boys, who had held somewhat aloof from the others, struck off from the town, and took the road that led to some newly-built villas. They were not brothers, scarcely friends; their only bond consisted in the fact that both had newly arrived in the neighborhood, and lived close by each other.

George Elliot and Harry Bruce were strong-made, good-looking boys, of about twelve years old; and one could not help wondering if He, who looketh on the hearts, saw the same beauty there which those did who looked only on the outward appearance. One criterion alone man hath wherewith to judge: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Let us follow them, and form our own judgment.

For some minutes the two went quickly on, talking over the events of the day, criticising, as boys will do, the other boys, and also the masters. Presently they saw a little girl coming along with several books in her hand, one of which, just as she was passing the boys, fell at George Elliot's feet.

With a loud laugh he kicked it away, as if it had been a foot-ball, along the dusty road. On seeing this, the child began crying violently, and was only quieted by Harry Bruce's kind words as he gave her the book which, after a struggle, he had rescued from his companion.

"O George," he remonstrated, "how could you treat a girl so! Poor little thing, perhaps she will get scolded for having got it spoiled; it was meant to treat her like that."

George's reply was an angry retort: "Mind your own business, and let me alone. What do I care about a girl?"

After that the boys walked more apart, George whistling, perhaps to drown a still, small voice. If so, he must have succeeded well in doing so; for when a small black dog, who was leading a blind man, jumped upon him, and with a small tin in its mouth, began in its way to beg a copper for its master, George knocked it off so angrily that the tin fell down, and a number of coppers which were in it were scattered on all sides.

The blind man in great distress began groping about for the pennies, endeavoring in vain to find out who was the culprit. Harry quickly came to his aid, and, after a little difficulty, got them all, and added to the little store two of his own. He then spoke kindly to the old man; and learning that he lived in a small cottage close by, promised to come and see him and his dog some day soon.

The kind words warmed the old man's heart. Poor old man, he needed them all! Afflicted by God, he was yet often doubly afflicted by cruel, thoughtless children, who scrupled not to make fun of blind Sam. But the blindness was only that of sense. Four years ago the bright light of the Gospel of Christ had shone on blind Sam, and lighted up the eye of faith.

Just as Harry had stopped speaking to the blind man, and was turning off, a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a pleasant-looking gentleman asked if he were Harry Bruce. On receiving an answer in the affirmative, he detained him a few minutes to ask him some questions; then pointing to poor Sam, who had wandered on, he said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me. Have you learned to love Him who said these words?"

Harry's bright look said more than his words: "I hope so, sir; mother taught me early about Him."

Mr. Lewis then shook hands with him, and walked slowly on. He had been behind the boys the whole way, and observed the different conduct of each. He had a motive in doing so; for his own little boy was at the same school with them, and he wished to judge, as far as he could, if they would be good companions, in case his boy should become intimate with them. He had seen enough to satisfy him. Disregard to the feelings of others, cruelty to a dumb animal and a suffering fellow-creature, were no small sins in Mr. Lewis's eyes; and the words which rose to his lips were, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Had he followed the two boys to their respective homes, and marked their conduct there, his opinion of them would have been confirmed.

Angry and put out, George's behavior was an annoyance to every one in his home all that afternoon. He quarrelled with his sisters, fought with his little brothers, and even spoke rudely to his mother—effectually destroying the peace of every one; an event of no uncommon occurrence.

In Harry's home it was very different. A shout of delight from little voices hailed the entrance of the favorite brother. Ah! here comes Harry; now I'll get my kite up, said one; and I'll have a game of ball now, and we'll all have such a nice play in the woods, for Harry's always so kind, said another, and another. And Harry's widowed mother brightened up as she heard his voice, and listened to the stories of his new school, and his account of blind Sam, ending with, "And best of all, mamma, a gentleman told me Sam was one of the Lord's people. Sha'n't you go to see him? I am sure he'd like to hear you read about Jesus." The promise was given; and through the means of little Harry, brighter days were in store for poor Sam.

Some days after the events we have written of, little Willie Lewis entered his papa's study with an animated face. He had a request to make.

"Papa, may I ask the two new boys to tea? I want so much to make friends with them, for they seem shy, and don't mix with the others; may I?"

Willie was somewhat surprised at the determined tone of his father's answer: "Harry Bruce you may ask, but not Elliot. I do not wish you to make an intimate companion of him; I don't think him at all a good boy."

"Not a good boy, papa! how do you know that?"

"By his fruits, Willie; that is what I have judged by. Now go; I am busy, and cannot be disturbed at present."

Willie Lewis went at once; he was never allowed to disobey a given order. But now he kept questioning the justice of his father's condemnation of George Elliot;—what would he know about him? and what did he mean by saying that he judged him by his fruits?

When Mr. Lewis, after he had finished his business, came into the room where Willie sat, he did not fail to observe his disappointed look; and, finding his lessons were all prepared, he invited him to come and have a walk.

After strolling about for some time, they turned into a large, nicely-kept garden, gay with the brightest of summer flowers, and well stocked with fruit-trees of all descriptions. The balmy air, the bright sunshine, and, above all, the pleasure of a walk with his papa, had made Willie forget his vexation at not being allowed to ask Elliot to tea.

As they walked round the garden, Mr. Lewis stopped as they passed two pear-trees laden with fruit, and examined them attentively. Willie knew well about these trees, and had heard his papa and the gardener talking about them one day before. The one bore delightful, juicy pears, the other small, hard ones, that if they hung ever so long, remained unfit to eat; and no wonder, for the tree was a bad one.

Mr. Lewis looked at the pears, felt them, and shook his head.

"Papa," said Willie, "isn't it a pity that tree is such a bad one?"

"How do you know it is, Willie?"

"How do I know? O, papa, 'tisn't difficult to know—look at the fruit; don't you see?"

"Then you judge that because the fruit is bad, the tree cannot be good?"

"Yes, certainly, papa. Of course, if the tree were good, the fruit would be also—would it not?"

Mr. Lewis smiled. "Yes, Willie, you're right. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

And now, do you see why I said George Elliot could not be a good boy? for I judged by his fruits. How could you suppose, even for a moment, that I should condemn any boy as a bad one, without proof?"

He then related what he had seen and heard of the two boys.

"So you see, Willie, Elliot's conduct told me as plainly what sort of a boy he was, as the bad, degenerate fruit on that pear-tree tells what sort of tree it is that produces it."

By their fruits ye shall know them' are words of no small import. He who spoke them was the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. He was warning his disciples against men who, professing to be the prophets of the Lord, yet by their wicked words showed they were none of his. Had they been so, they would have borne the fruits of righteousness."

Willie hung his head somewhat abashed. He saw now his papa had not spoken without good reason. If such were the fruits which Elliot bore, he could not be a good companion.

Ere long, Harry Bruce and Willie Lewis became inseparable friends; and Mr. Lewis marked with no small pleasure the influence that Harry's upright, kind, Christian character exercised over Willie. From him he learnt to sympathize with, and, by kind words and deeds, to help, his fellow-creatures; and mingling with Harry's brothers, sisters, and mother, did much good to the motherless only boy.

Often in after years, when removed from a father's guidance, and exposed to the temptations of life, ere choosing a companion, Willie Lewis's thoughts turned to his quiet country home, and the lesson his father had taught him from the two pear-trees and the fruit they bore. And even in old age he was heard to declare that he could boast of no better friend than the one he made in his boyish days, the noble-hearted Christian, Harry Bruce.

Dear readers, what sort of fruit are you bearing—good or evil? Stop one moment and ask yourselves; for remember it is no mere man, but the Lord Jesus, the Searcher of all hearts, who hath said: "By their fruits ye shall know them." And the wise king hath also said: "Even a child is known by his doing, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right." One thing I know, if the love of Jesus has filled your hearts, your lives will show forth his praise. If the Holy Spirit dwells in you as He does in all the children of God, then you will be bearing the fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance, faith. Are you? Christian Treasury.

HELP ONE ANOTHER.

A traveler who was passing over the Alps was overtaken by a snow-storm at the top of a high mountain. The cold became intense. The air was thick with sleet, and the piercing wind seemed to penetrate into his bones.

Still the traveler, for a time, struggled on. But at last his limbs were quite benumbed; a heavy drowsiness began to creep over him; his feet almost refused to move; and he lay down on the snow to give way to that fatal sleep which is the last stage of extreme cold, and from which he would certainly never have waked up again in this world.

Just at that moment he saw another poor traveler coming up the road. The unhappy man seemed to be, if possible, even in a worse condition than himself; for he, too, could scarcely move, and he appeared to be just at the point of death. When he saw this poor man, the traveler who was just going to lie down to sleep made a great effort. He roused himself up, and he crawled, for he was scarcely able to walk, to his fellow-sufferer.

He took his hands in his own, and tried to warm them. He rubbed his temples, his feet, his whole body; and all the time he spoke cheering words in his ear, and tried to comfort him.

As he did this, the dying man began to revive; his powers were restored, and he felt able to go forward. But this was not all; for his kind benefactor, too, was recovered by the efforts he had made to save his friend. The exertion of rubbing made the blood circulate again in his own body. He grew warm by trying to warm the other.

Soon the snow-storm passed away; the mountain was crossed, and they reached their homes in safety. If you feel your heart cold towards others, and your soul almost perishing, try to do something which may help another soul to life, and make his heart glad; and you will often find it the best way to warm and restore and gladden your own.

[For the American Presbyterian.]

HERE AND THERE.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation." Here, our hands are clasped in weeping; Through earth's dark and dreary night; There, they shall be ever sweeping Harps of gold in perfect light.

Here, our eyes with tears are streaming, Looking for some resting place; There, they shall with joy be gleaming, Gazing on a Father's face.

Here, our bleeding feet are threading Tangled mazes, dark and drear; There, they may be ever treading Blooming fields, by waters clear.

Here, our brows lie low in anguish, Oft with grief and care bowed down; There, no head with pain shall languish, None shall droop 'neath golden crown.

Here, the soul in secret tosses, Oft with wounds too deep to heal; But no long-borne lonely crosses, Will those blood-washed robes conceal.

Here, is sinning, struggling, doubting, Mid temptations fierce and sore; There, triumphs that are about to bring "Victory!" "Victory!" ever more.

A DAY ON THE LAKE.

Edith and Archie Campbell had come from their English home to spend the summer holidays with their aunt, among the mountains and lakes of old Scotland. Many a delightful ramble they took over the hills which sheltered their aunt's cottage, until their cheeks glowed with almost as deep a color as the heather-bells around.

But one great pleasure was yet in prospect: a day's sailing on the lake, near the edge of which the cottage stood,—that beautiful looking-glass, as Edith called it, where the sun saw his shining face reflected by day, and into which the moon and stars peeped and winked at night! But Aunt Mary would not venture to sail on the lake until her only son, cousin Walter, came home from college, where he was learning to be a doctor. So of course the children always thought of Cousin Walter and the boat trip together, and were in great spirits when he arrived from Edinburgh on Saturday evening.

After a quiet, happy Sabbath, Monday morning came in, bringing work and play again, fair weather, and fresh thoughts about the sail. Now Cousin Walter was the very pleasantest of doctors; so he soon ordered a day's boating as quite necessary for the children's health. And Aunt Mary seemed to have expected the prescription; for how otherwise could she have got those biscuits and pies ready packed in the basket, which Edith and Archie so willingly carried down to the boat?

Right merrily the white-sailed boat moved over the smooth water. Now and then Walter and an old sailor took the oars, while both the children assisted Aunt Mary in steering; so it was no wonder the time past swiftly when every one was so busily engaged. But after some hours of sailing, when the biscuits and pies had disappeared, and the little boat's bow was turned homeward, Edith and Archie grew rather sober, as we are wont to do when weary. The doctor had a new prescription. He ordered each of the children, his little impatient, he called them, to tell him everything they could about lakes, not in proper geography answers, but just in their own words. So a large amount of information was given about lakes sweet and clear, like the one they were sailing on, and others salt and bitter, like the Dead Sea of Syria; about lakes through which rivers ran, like those of Constance and Geneva, and about others which receive much water, but seem to give none away.

Then Cousin Walter told of some lakes in Egypt, where the water evaporated in summer, leaving a bed of soda at the bottom, which is collected in great quantities and sold. And Aunt Mary said she had read of one lake in Tibet, which deposits a peculiar salt called borax, or tinal, that is much used in soldering metals.

Old Donal, the sailor, had also something to say. He had been in America, and could tell wonderful tales about the grand Canadian lakes, vast seas of fresh water, which, together with the river St. Lawrence, cover a surface of nearly a hundred thousand square miles, and are supposed to contain almost one-half of all the fresh water on the face of the earth.

Then came stories about lakes nearer home—how Loch Leven reminded one of Mary Queen of Scots, since the time that the beautiful prisoner made her escape from its water-guarded castle in the skiff of George Douglas.

By a sudden leap of thought, Archie passed over to Switzerland next, and asked Cousin Walter for a story about William Tell. So Walter told them how, in 1307, an Austrian Governor, called Gessler, tried to oppress the brave Swiss, and in token of their subjection, commanded them to bow to his cap, which he had raised on a pole. A noble peasant, named Tell, refused to do so. As a punishment, Gessler ordered him to shoot an arrow through an apple placed on the head of Tell's own son. The arrow divided the apple. The little boy was unhurt.

But a second arrow was observed in the belt of the bowman. "That was for the tyrant's heart," cried Tell, "if I had killed my son." He was made prisoner for this rash speech, and thrown bound into a boat in which the Governor was going to cross the Lake of Lucerne. A terrible tempest overtook the boat; and, as Tell was an excellent steersman, Gessler commanded him to be unbowed, hoping that he could guide the bark to land. Tell succeeded in doing this; but, before the boat touched the ground, he leaped on shore, and springing up from rock to rock, was free. Then, turning round, he sent an arrow through the breast of Gessler, and won the liberty of his country.

Aunt Mary had her story too. It was about One who came to save not one country only, but a world—not by destroying the life of the wicked, but by laying down his own. So she told the sweet story of Jesus walking on the Lake of Galilee, when his disciples were crossing it in a little storm-tossed ship, and how, amid the darkness of the night, they did not know the Master until the cheering words, "It is I; be not afraid," were borne on the wind-blast. And the simple command, "Peace, be still," from the lips of the Maker of all, sent the winds and waves to sleep, and brought to the troubled hearts of the disciples a great calm.

"So have I seen a fearful storm O'er wakened sinner roll, Till Jesus' voice and Jesus' form Said, 'Peace, thou weary soul: Peace! peace! be still, thou raging breast; My fulness is for thee.' The Saviour speaks, and all is rest, Like the waves of Galilee."

Just as Aunt Mary finished her story, the white-sailed boat touched the shore under the cottage windows. The little party were soon seated round the tea-table, and Edith was trying all her powers of coaxing to persuade Cousin Walter to prescribe another day on the lake.

JIM AND THE COMPASS-BOX.

When Tom, the sailor-boy, and his father came into port, another sailor came off the vessel with them. He was called "Jim, the boy from Maine," though he was much more of a man than a boy.

Jim made a visit to Tom's mother. He was a kind, good fellow. He could tell long stories of the sea. The children followed him around, and kept near him all day long.

"Now, boys, I'll tell you," said Jim, one day. "We got lost at sea once. We couldn't tell where we were going to for a while."

"Got lost!" cried Frank Gill; "I should think you would. How do you ever know where you are going, Jim?"

Jim looked as if he knew, but wouldn't tell.

"Now come tell us, Jim," said two or three voices.

"Did you ever see a compass, boys?" "A compass! What is that?"

"I'll show you," said Jim; and he left the boys on the shore, and ran back to the house where Tom's father lived. The boys watched a few minutes, till they saw Jim coming, with a little box in his hands.

"Now, boys, I'll sit down on this log, and show you a compass, such as we use at sea." The box was covered with glass. The boys came round and looked.

"Does this keep you from being lost at sea, Jim?"

"Yes; and I'll show you how. This card is divided into thirty-two points. Now, begin here at the north and count them round. Then look at this little needle. If it is ever so dark or stormy, it points right to the north, and this shows us how to sail. There is a magnet, or loadstone, which gives the needle the power to do this; and it always does it where it has a fair chance. We put this box on board ship, where the man can see it who stands at the helm to steer; and, by looking at the needle, he knows which way to guide the ship."

"Now, hurrah for the compass, boys, and for every boy who steers right! To steer right is to go just the way the Bible tells us. This makes good boys, brave boys, great men, and happy men."—English Paper.

GOD'S HEROES.

Here are "God's heroes," the heroes of the sick-chamber and the vigil by the cradle-side; the heroes of poverty and the work-shop; of silent, patient endurance, having learned, through much tribulation, that waiting and suffering is their destined work; the heroes of long suffering, forbearance and charity, or of victory over pain, of the unostentatious self-denial of the household; the lowly, toiling, sad woman, climbing mounts of sacrifices under heavy crosses, without a human hand held out in sympathy; the noble army of martyrs who have found and followed the Master's footprints in the daily round of human duties, transfiguring that despised, circumscribed, care-encumbered life of theirs into a living testimony to the truth of Christ's evangel; the lonely sufferers, priests, by a heavenly consideration, offering the sacrifices of praise in garret and cellar; men and women far from stimulating delights of successful activities, co-workers with Christ, sowing in hope the seed whose interest they shall never reap; "the sacramental host of God's elect," ever ascending with songs most jubilant from the faithful performance

of earth's lower ministries to the perfect service of the upper sanctuary with its perennial and unhindered praise. They are passing up through the gates of the morning into the city without a temple, and it is for other fingers than ours to weave the amaranth round their lonely brow.—North British Review.

FRUIT-BEARING.

"Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none.—Lukx xviii. 7.

And yet you profess to be a fruit-bearer. The position that you occupy implies that you have separated yourself from the fruitless trees of the world. You are in the vineyard of the Lord. You are called by his name. In assuming the designation of Christian, you have invited the Lord to come and seek fruit on your branches.

All things have been duly organized, in order that you may bring forth fruit. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Has there been any lack of instruction as to the nature of the fruit required? There has been no lack. It has been shown you by precept, by example, poetically, historically, in parables, and in undorned speech. Have inadequate motives been presented? The Son of God, with arms outstretched upon the cross, pleading with God for you, and with you for God—what an infinitude of motives are comprehended in this spectacle! Fruitlessness is not merely wrong to others; it is self-injury, penury of the soul; and fruitfulness is the only true wealth we are capable of knowing. The absence of fruit is the presence of pride, vanity, selfishness, and all forms of unloveliness. Is there no adequacy of motive here? The whole earth is fruitful, in order that you may be fruitful. Far, far away there is a plantation, whose products are matured through many a day of patient shining of the sun, that they may, after the ministry of innumerable hands, by numerous channels, reach you, and furnish you with clothing. Other fields, beneath a more tropical sky—some in one continent, some in another—yield the ingredients of your morning beverage. In the unfrequented depths of vast forests, the powers of nature watch day and night over the plant that is commissioned to furnish an antidote for your fever. The whole world is put under daily contribution for you, and hardly is the least of your thousand wants unattended to, that every opportunity and every inducement may be furnished you for the producing of fruit.

Why is that flower painted so exquisitely, and fashioned to be the momentary utterance of enduring love, and then thrown in your path by the Maker of it, but that you may render fruit? "Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance," and to all the fruits of the Spirit that follow on repentance?

The Lord of glory himself has come to you, and come again; and again; by his servants, his Spirit, his providence; as a still small voice in your heart, and perhaps as a whirlwind among your possessions. Where found he you? In sloth, in revelry, in worldliness, in pride, in passion—far, very far from fruitfulness. How wonderful that your probation was not then and there cut short. What reason is there to hope that a prolonged probation will witness any better results?—Brown's Daily Meditations.

WOMAN'S BEAUTY.

"I was glad to have it in my power to do anything my husband wanted me to do," was the beautiful reply of a wife long married, of wealth and position, when I asked her why, by overtaxing herself, she had induced great bodily suffering.

A man was terribly injured; a muslin bandage was essential to his safety; it was not at hand, and there was no time to run for it. A young woman present disappeared, and returned the next instant with the requisite article, taken from her under garment, and the poor man's life was saved.

"My dear wife, I am hopelessly bankrupt," said a merchant, when he entered his fine mansion, at the close of a day, all fruitless in his endeavor to save himself when men were crashing around him in every direction. "Tell me the particulars, dearest," said his wife, calmly. On hearing them and his wants to save himself, "Is that all?" and absenting herself a moment, she returned with a book, from between the leaves of which she took bank note after bank note, until enough was counted to fully meet all her husband's requirements. "This," she said, in reply to his mingled look of admiration and astonishment, "is what I have saved for such a possible day as this, from your princely allowance for dressing myself since we were married."

If every mother made it her ambition to mould her daughter's heart in forms like these, who shall deny that many a noble-hearted man would be saved from a life of abandonment or a drunkard's dreadful death, and many families prevented being thrown upon society in destitution and helplessness, to furnish inmates for the jail, the "poor-house," the asylum and the hospital?