

The Family Circle.

PATTER OF LITTLE FEET.

[The following beautiful lines were written by the wife of General Lewis Wallace.]

Up with the sun at morning,
Away to the garden he hies,
To see if the sleepy blossoms
Have begun to open their eyes.
Running a race with the wind,
With a step as light and fleet,
Under my window I hear
The patter of little feet.

This child is our "speaking picture,"
A birdling that chatters and sings,
Sometimes a sleeping cherub—
(Our other one has wings).
His heart is a charming casket,
Full of all that's cunning and sweet,
And no harp-string holds such music,
As follows his twinkling feet.

When the glory of sunset opens
The highway by angelic trod,
And seems to unbar the city,
Whose builder and maker is God—
Close to the crystal portal,
I see by the gate of pearl
The eyes of our other angel—
A twin-born little girl.

And I ask to be taught and directed
To guide his footsteps aright,
So that I be accounted worthy
To walk in sandals of light,
And hear amid songs of welcome,
From messengers trusty and fleet,
On the starry floor of heaven,
The patter of little feet.

CAN A CHILD COMPREHEND?

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT, M. E. M.

I must have been ten years old, when the daughter of our nearest neighbor, Mr. Pomfret, was taken sick and died. The youngest of a large, merry family, indulged by my father and mother, and petted by brothers and sisters, the only person who had ever ventured to reprove me for my vanity and self-will, had been Miss Phebe. She was my Sabbath-school teacher, and as I had never seen a death-bed till I saw hers, and as she had completely won my childish love and faith, the scene made a deep and lasting impression upon my mind.

She was ill a long time. I recall her to-day, as she looked, lying on her little low bed, with her face to the window, that she might see the flowers in the garden before the door, the green on the distant mountain sides and the sunlight flashing silver on the stream that wound itself in and out, like a ribbon, among the hills and hollows of Berks county. Her cheeks at first were like the ripe side of a peach, so soft a bloom lay upon them, and her eyes like great violets, so deeply blue; but slowly the bloom faded and her cheeks grew wan and thin; a hollow cough shook her frame, and her eyes only retained the sparkle and the glow that had once lit up the girlish face.

I did not think she would die. So it was with feelings too intense for utterance that I one day heard a conversation between my mother and my oldest sister Eunice, who had been out for a walk, and was folding up her shawl; it was a new one, and required great care.

"Mother," said she, "they say Phebe Pomfret won't last much longer."
"She is going just like her Aunt Nancy," said my mother. "Nancy Pomfret died just before I was married. She went out like the flicker of a candle. It was sadder, in one way, than Phebe's going, for she was to have been married, and they laid her out in her fresh, white bridal dress, the very day that would have been her wedding day."

I heard with a white face and a beating heart. That night I cried myself to sleep. But soon I grew familiar with the thought. Indeed, I came to regard it as all a mistake, for Phebe's room was so restful and serene, her smile was so ready, herself so bright and happy, that I thought she could not be dying. Could one who stood so near the dark river be so calm, so little afraid?

Mother often went to help in taking care of her, and, towards the last, to sit up with her at night, for the Pomfrets were all tired out. One morning she came home with so sad a face, that we all gathered about her and would fain have asked questions. She checked us with a glance. "Phebe is dying!" she said. "The end may not be to-day nor to-morrow, but it is not far off. Dr. Ives says she cannot last another week!"

That day the girls all went to see her and bid her good-by. I went, too, as I had gone every day for weeks, taking her now a glass of jolly or a cup of custard, and now a violet, or a half-opened rose, or a sprig of geranium from my own little pot. To-day I had found a few sprays of the fair white lily of the valley, and I carried them in my hand as I went up to the bedside.

The sheets and pillow slips on the couch were as white as new fallen snow, but they were not so pure as the thin hand that touched mine as I offered my flowers. It dawned on me then, as I looked at her pale face, that was yet so bright, that it was bright with reflected light; there was a glory within that shone out of the blue eyes.

"Little Agnes," said my teacher, "you have been as dear as a sister to me. When I am gone I want you to have my little Bible. Promise me that you will read it every day; not alone for my sake, but because it is God's word. It will be a lamp to your feet, my darling."

"But, Miss Phebe," I said, "you are not going away! you will get well, now that the days are getting so bright and sunny."

"Yes, darling, I shall soon be well, but it will not be in this world. Before the roses blossom in yonder tree, I shall be far away from here."

I could not speak for tears; but Phebe said:—

"Don't distress yourself so, Agnes. Turn to the 2d Chapter of Solomon's Song and the 10th verse, and read it to me. I read: 'My

beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her leaves, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

"There, Agnes," said Phebe, "that is the voice that I seem to hear, as I look out on the beauty of the May. I shall never see another May on earth, but these eyes shall soon look on the King in His beauty. My darling, so live that you may meet me in heaven."

"Oh! Phebe," I said, "why must you go away? Why do you love to go?"
"It is because Jesus calls me home," said Phebe. "I am leaning on Jesus, and he makes the dark valley light."

Those were the last words my dear Phebe ever said to me. Ere another sun had risen she had gone to that land where there is no more death. Through years of struggle and sorrow, through years of unbelief and doubt, I ever kept in my memory that precious death-bed scene and those triumphant words: "I am leaning upon Jesus!"

For it was long before I came myself to this same trustful way of leaning; I wanted to be doing. I read Phebe's Bible, but it was with blind eyes, and my heart had no wish to behold the beauty of which she had so clear a sight.

A few weeks after Phebe had been laid in her grave, her father came over to our house to consult with mine about some fencing. When business was over, and he rose to go, he said in a slow, uncertain way:—

"Good evening, neighbor; your house is more pleasant than mine. All the light went with my little girl."

"But she left a ray to help you on," said my father. "Phebe's death was very happy."
"Yes," said Mr. Pomfret; "she had never done any thing wrong—she might well be happy. Well, well, if a man does the best he can and never harms anybody, I suppose he'll have a chance."

After he went away, I said:—
"Father, isn't Mr. Pomfret wrong? The best that he can do won't take him to heaven, will it? and wasn't Phebe sinful like the rest of us? What did Mr. Pomfret mean by having a chance?"

"Wait a little, Agnes," said my father, kindly. "Study your catechism and read your Bible, and you'll know all about it when you're older."

So my father went back to his newspaper, and my mother came in from the kitchen and sat down to her evening work. Mary was darning stockings, and Eunice was stoning raisins for a cake to be made to-morrow. John was working a sum in the rule of three. I alone sat dreaming in my little chair, wondering whether Mr. Pomfret's theology was right, or whether, as I had said only that morning in my catechism lesson, "I was dead in trespasses and sin, and could do naught to save myself." By-and-by mother called me: "Come, Agnes, you are growing into a great idle girl. I have set up a stocking for you. Bring your chair here, and let me see how many rows you can knit before bed-time. You must quit looking so sad, pet; your weeping won't bring Phebe back, and she is far happier now than she was when here. You are getting to be a dreamer, child. I want you to be a worker."

Father looked up from his paper, and smiled.
"Mother," said he, "if our Agnes were a boy, I should say we were going to have one minister in our family. She is actually troubling her little head about the mysteries of election and free agency!"

Mother looked troubled and said:—
"This comes of having nothing to do. I don't like girls to speculate. There's a narrow path, and few there be that find it. All you have to do, Agnes, is your duty, and leave the rest to God. When you are older, you can think. At present, if you obey your parents, keep holy the Sabbath and tell the truth, you are as good as we can expect."

Dear mother! she little knew what seeds she was sowing. She thought that a child could not comprehend; forgetting that it was a child whom the Master sat before the disciples, saying:—

"Except ye become as the least of these little ones, you can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven."

The years glided on, and I became a woman. A woman of studious temperament and energetic habits, withal, and often perplexed—and no wonder—by the strange things into which the angels desire to look.

Sister after sister, friend after friend came out on the Lord's side, but I still held back. It was not because I was careless or cold. It was because the innate pride of my nature would not be subdued. I could have paid any price, had it been mine to pay, for salvation; could have endured any sufferings, had it been sufficient to atone. But salvation as a free gift, the price all paid, the atonement finished—nothing for me but to take life eternal from the hand that was nailed to the cross—there my sinful heart rebelled. And so I staid sorrowfully without, knowing little peace, and ever groping in the dark. And gradually my practical belief came to be that of poor Mr. Pomfret's: "I'll do the best I can—may be I'll have a chance."

And this is how the light came at last. I was the happy mother of children. Four bright-eyed darlings clustered in our home. So round, so rosy, so happy that I did not dream of losing one. But God saw what was best. Like the boy of old in the harvest-field, my eldest boy, my Walter, one day put his hand up, exclaiming, "My head! my head!" A few short hours, and the physician told me there was no hope. The words fell on my heart like ice.

"Oh, Walter!" said I, "do you love Jesus? Jesus wants you, my son. He is calling you home."

With a smile that I shall never forget while memory lasts, he looked up:—

"Yes, mamma, I am leaning on him. You know

"Nothing either great or small
Remains for me to do;
Jesus died and paid it all,
All the debt I owe."

God had taught the child! Over my boy's cold form I poured bitter tears, but, oh! there was a balm mingled with them. A hand had taken mine, and was leading me; a heart, the infinite heart of Jesus, had taken me in; a home, fairer than the stars, stronger than the everlasting hills, awaited me, when the journey of life was over.

I am happy now, for I, too, have learned to lean on "my Beloved." But how many years, golden years, earnest years, might have been blest, had those around me remembered that the vital truths of our religion are so plain that a child can comprehend them. Do not check the young seeker after truth with the advice to wait; do not discourage the little hand that is stealing up to touch the hand of the Master. There are deep things of God, which the wisest can sound with no plummet, but the one deep, broad, high, wonderful thing is, the love that stoops to save the lost, whether child or old man. Above all, do not tell them to build on a foundation of good works, which shall be as the sand, but bid them plant their feet upon the rock. And so they shall be joyful forever more.

A CHRISTMAS EVE WITH THOLUCK.

In the year 1857, matriculated as a student at the University of Halle, Dr. Tholuck's name stood first and chiefest on my *Annuaire*. Tholuck was then the theological Washington, foremost in the war against rationalism, and honored as the veritable St. George who slew the skeptical dragon. His lecture-room, the most capacious in the university, was thronged. Students flocked to this Gamaliel from every corner of Christendom. The Australian here met the American.

His biography is formed of romantic tissue. The son of a tinker, he is the husband of a countess. Pantheistic as a student, and a speculative defender of the symmetry of Mohammedanism, his intellect became invigorated and cleansed by contact with Schleiermacher and Neander, and his heart was touched with Christian love as he saw it vital in the life of his friend, that pure Moravian prophet, Baron von Kottwitz. When De Wette was expelled from the chair of Oriental Literature at Berlin for his misconstrued letter to Ludwig Sand, that fanatical devotee to the freedom of Fatherland, and assassin of Kotzebue, Tholuck was called to the vacancy.

At the time of which I write Tholuck had stepped from Berlin to Halle, and from the shoes of De Wette to those of Dr. Knapp, deceased, professor of theology. Tholuck's versatility and directness, tempered with a rare gentleness, made him the person in whom, more than in any other, the victory over rationalism was celebrated.

The day of evergreen trees and presents was approaching. Each morning my landlady gave an interrogative lift to her eyelids, while her mouth put the straight question, "Are you invited yet?" Lucky and honored I counted myself to be one of the bidden, in due time, to the Christmas hospitality of the great professor. Out of the 800 or 1,000 students who patronized his lectures, only 40 or 50 made up the Christmas party. Nine years have dimmed somewhat the details of my recollection. I see, however, as in a picture, the antique gateway through which we entered the court, and the door that ushered us to the cordiality of that *petite polyglot* of modern languages, the Countess Von Genuiningen, Frau Tholuck; and can hear her brightly voice adapting its welcome to Frenchman, Italian, Spaniard, or Englishman (I know not to how many more nationalities), according to the vernacular of the guest. Passing at length through the domestic portion of the house, we enter a long, barren hall, sprigged here and there with evergreen, through the center of which is spread the Christmas table. At the further extremity folding-doors partition us from one of the Doctor's library and study-rooms. The surroundings possessed a cathedral solemnity. There was very little chatting, and that little in suppressed tones. Soon the folding-doors parted, and a vivid tableau of the Nativity confronted us. There was the cavernous stable; there the holy family, Joseph and the feeble Mary, and the Saviour infant, mangered, from whose head the "glory" radiated. So novel was the scene, so earnest, and thoughtful, and serious all around, that the representation appeared the reality, and not a modern anniversary of it. We were at Bethlehem, and the Saviour was present. Who of us could ever doubt henceforth that Christ was born? From out of the gloom behind floated soft and full a Christmas carol, which fell like the angel's song. It was rendered with artistic sympathy by musicians selected from the students.

Scarcely had the last notes ceased when, rising from his chair, Tholuck stepped forth, and, catching the cadence of the occasion, spoke with simple, heart-felt eloquence of the day, and of the relation of education to it; of student-life, and the scholar's ideal; of the dear Jesus as the inspirer of all true thought and the consummation of all worldly ambition; and of the day of rest, and the student-life of heaven.

He who knows Tholuck only through his voluminous writings will scarcely do justice to two of his excellent qualities: first, his intuitive reading of human nature; and, secondly, his deep and holy interest in each individual. I venture that no one ever heard him on these familiar occasions without this impression.

Certainly you never could have accompanied him in his daily walk (so coveted a privilege), when the freshness of his nature leaped out to meet the sunshine, and when whatever he said seemed to be bailing your lakelet to fill it again from his ocean, without feeling that you were walking with a vast library, heated by a great heart, and opened up to you through two illuminated windows. Much less were your two hands ever taken by his, *vis-a-vis*, and eye to eye (favorite attitude when he said his tenderest, truest things), but that you were conscious that Tholuck had read you like an open book, and that Tholuck loved you. He stood that evening, old, and bent, and weakened by age; aged in thought and acquisition, yet his soul was as chipper and wingful as a canary, and seemed illy domiciled in so rickety a cage.

From the address we dropped through the ice of formality into easy social swimming, and were sent hunting for our names at the table. The plate of each was labeled and loaded with the inevitable German Christmas cake and confections. And under each was a present of more or less intrinsic value (usually a book or pamphlet of his own writing) made priceless to each by some autograph and original counsel delicately adapted to some foible of the recipient. From the fly-leaf of a presentation copy of his Epistle to the Romans I translate this sentiment, which has never been before in type: "The reason why we find so many dark places in the Bible is, for the most part, because there are so many dark places in our hearts. It belongs to the nature of this Book that it was written for all men of every time, and for all the experiences of each single human heart. Scarcely a single one in any time of his life has exhausted it, and each one at any time can still find many dark places therein."

Following the promiscuous conversation of an hour came the touching prayer and choral hymn, and each felt encouraged and elevated by his Christmas eve with Tholuck; and one, at least, treasures it as a blessed point in a life-time.

Such a celebration might not profitably be imitated in this latitude of thought and work. Yet, as the occasion for our Puritan dislike of honoring the day has passed, who does not rejoice that it is becoming more and more a holy festival in all the families of the land and in all the churches? May we live to see the anniversary of Christ's birth as heartily and universally observed as is the birthday of our national Independence. We want more holy-days. Make Christmas the holiest.—*W. A. Bartlett.*

REMARKABLE CONVERSION.

The following remarkable statement is authorized by D'Aubigne and M. de Presensse:

A regiment of French soldiers, on their march to the Crimea, halted for some days at Toulon, in the South of France. While there, a colporteur came among them. A young soldier, pretending to be much moved by the good man's exhortations, asked for a Bible, which was, of course, given to him. The soldier and his companions roared with laughter, telling the colporteur that it was all a joke; but the soldier refused to return the book, saying, "It would do to light his pipe with." The colporteur replied, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

Fifteen months afterward, the same colporteur stopped for a night at an inn, more than three hundred miles from Toulon. The landlady was in great distress, having just lost her son, of whom she spoke in terms of the most tender affection. He conversed with her for a few moments, when she withdrew, but soon returned bringing a little book, which her deceased son had left to her as his precious legacy.

It was much mutilated, many pages having been torn out. But on the inside of the cover, written in large letters, was the following inscription: "Received at Toulon, on the —, 1855. Despised at first, and badly used, but afterward read, believed, and made the instrument of my salvation. J. L., fusilier of the Fourth Company of the — Regiment of the Line."

From the condition of the little volume, it was plain that the young soldier had made use of the missing leaves to light his pipe, as he had boasted he should. But, as he had related to his mother, this work of destruction was stopped on the evening before the battle, in which his regiment was to occupy the perilous post of the advance guard. He stated that at this juncture, serious thoughts came into his mind, in a very strange manner; and all of a sudden the words of the man whom he had tricked out of the book, came to his recollection like a thunder-clap. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" "And if I should fall into His hands!" This thought haunted him, he said, without intermission, the whole of the night; and in consequence as soon as it became light in the morning, he took from his knapsack the book which appeared to have become his accuser. The verses which he had read in the dim gray light of the morning, had been brought home to his heart by the Holy Spirit. In the battle which ensued he was severely wounded. Old things had passed away, and he now realized the truth of the faithful saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

After removing from one hospital to another, he was brought back to his home, about six weeks before the visit of the colporteur. The mutilated testament was scarcely ever out of his hand during walking moments. It was the only one he ever possessed—perhaps the only one in his native village. His mouth was full of tender entreaties that his dear mother and friends might embrace Christ and his salvation. To his very last breath, he ceased not to exhort them all to accept God's offered mercy in Jesus, and not to run the risk of falling in an unconverted state, "into the hands of the living God."

INTEMPERANCE AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

It is a fact that intemperance is running away with the nation. It is said that a thousand die annually, one hundred thousand go to prison, one hundred thousand to the almshouse, five hundred murders and a hundred suicides are committed every year through this fell appetite for strong drink. And the starting point to counteract this great evil is with the rising generation. The motto in each Sunday-school should be: "Touch not, taste not, handle not" the clean thing. The children should be impressed with the danger of using intoxicating drinks. We cannot begin too soon. And if it will help in the great work of reformation with the young, we need, and should have a temperance pledge in every Sunday-school, and we should get all the boys and girls we can to sign it. Girls need to sign it, because a young woman may do more harm than any young man may do; for it is almost impossible for a young man to refuse the glass of wine presented by the fair hand of woman. It is the first glass that does the mischief! Take the pledge in the Sunday-school? Yes. Take it in the church? Yes. Have a roll of honor in the school. Get a large piece of parchment or paper, and put it up in a conspicuous place in the school-room, and call it the roll of honor. Have the temperance pledge at the top, signed by the pastor, church-officers, and members, and endeavor to get all the scholars to add their names. And as the boys grow up he will see his name there, on the roll, and will feel that his honor is at stake, and be strengthened to resist temptation. But, with all these efforts, we must ever feel that, unless we can lead the children directly to Christ, there is no hope of escape from any of the vices by which life is surrounded.—*N. Y. Evangelist.*

WHO OUGHT TO BE PUNISHED?

The late Rev. John Thomas, one of the missionary brethren of Serampore, was one day, after addressing a crowd of natives on the banks of the Ganges, accosted by a Brahmin as follows: "Sir, don't you say that the devil tempts man to sin?" "Yes," answered Mr. Thomas. "Then," said the Brahmin, "certainly the fault is the devil's; the devil, therefore, and not man, ought to suffer the punishment." While the countenances of many of the natives discovered their appreciation of the Brahmin's inference, Mr. Thomas, observing a boat with several men on board descending the river, with that felicity of instructive retort for which he was distinguished, replied:—"Brahmin, do you send your boat?" "Yes," "Suppose I wash some of my friends, to destroy every person on board, and bring me all that is valuable in the boat, who ought to suffer punishment? I, for instructing them, or they, for doing this wicked act?" "Why," answered the Brahmin, with great emotion, "you ought all to be put to death together." "Ay, Brahmin," replied Mr. T., "and if you and the devil sin together, the devil and you will be punished together."

INVETERATE HABITS.

There is nothing more familiar to our daily observation than the power and inveteracy of habits, inasmuch that any decided propensity is strengthened by every new act of indulgence, and virtuous principle is more firmly established than before by every new act of resolute obedience to its dictates. The law which connects our actions of boyhood or of youth with the character of manhood, is the identical law which connects our actions in time with our characters in eternity. The way in which the moral discipline of youth prepares for the honors and enjoyments of a virtuous manhood, is the way in which the moral and spiritual discipline of the whole life prepares for a virtuous and happy immortality; and on the other hand, the succession of cause and effect from a profligate youth and dishonest manhood to a disgraced and worthless old age, is just the succession also of cause and effect between the succeeds and depravity of our history on earth, and our endurance of worthlessness and wretchedness forever.—*Chalmers.*

TIME TOO LONG AND TOO SHORT.

A very eminent writer has said, that although we seem aggrieved at the shortness of life in general, we are wishing every period of it at an end. The minor longs to be of age; then to be a man of business; then to arrive at honor; then to retire. The usurer would be very well satisfied to have all the time annihilated that lies between the present moment and the next quarter pay; the politician would be content to lose three years of his life, could he place things in the posture that he fancies they will occupy after such a revolution of time; and the lover would be glad to strike out all the moments of existence that are to pass away before the next meeting.

AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU.—We know a young man who, when a very little boy, was very active in the temperance cause. Before he was thirteen years of age he had prevailed upon more than a dozen poor drunks to sign the temperance pledge, and five of them became regular attendants at a place of worship.

It was his practice, when walking out, to take a few tracts in his pocket. When he saw a drunken man, he would go up to him and very kindly ask him to take a tract and attend a temperance meeting.—*Youth's Temperance Banner.*

On Past Experience.—We cannot see by the light of yesterday, nor subsist long upon yesterday's food. We need continual supplies every moment. So long as we feel our weakness, and lean upon an almighty arm, we are safe, but no longer.