

The Family Circle.

THE HEAVENLY SECRET.

Mr. George Cooper sends this stately and sustained poem of the grave theme of immortality:

Does the dark and soundless river
Stretched so wide—
The homeward rolling tide
Over which have crossed
Our loved and early lost,
That their unsealed eyes may never see
The further side,
Where still amid this toil and misery
We bide?

Is the realm of their transition
Close at hand,
To this, our living land?
Nearer than we dream?
Can they catch the gleam
Of our smiles, and hear the words we speak?
And see our needs?
And, looking deeper than our eyes may seek,
Our deeds?

Do they mingle in our gladness?
Do they grieve
When ways of good we leave?
Do they know each thought and hope,
While we in shadows grope?
Can they hear the Future's ear hehest,
Yet lack the power
To lead us from our ill, or to arrest
The hour?

When they find us bowed in sorrow,
Do they sigh?
Or when the earth passes by
For them, do they forget
The cares that here beset
Their well beloved? Or do they wait
(O be it thus!)
And watch beside the golden gate
For us?

We are yearning for their secret,
Though we call,
No answers ever fall
Upon our dulled ears,
To quell our nameless fears.
Yet God is over all, what'er he may be,
And trusting so,
Patience, my heart! a little while, and we,
Shall know.

—Geo. Cooper in Round Table.

THE MINISTER'S WIDOW AND THE MINISTER'S WIFE.

[COMMUNICATED.]

CHAPTER I.

There are persons who seem to have slipped into positions they can never, either creditably to themselves, or so as to benefit others. Such, unfortunately had been the case with the Rev. Mr. Hoopes, who for some years had been the pastor of the Presbyterian Church at M—, a flourishing country town in the northern part of Pennsylvania. That his motives had been honest when he first entered the ministry, I do not doubt, but he had unfortunately mistaken his calling. Neither his natural abilities nor scholarly training, fitted him for the task of instructing others; and although a good man, his piety was not of that deep and ardent character, that sometimes supplies most other deficiencies.

He had married a wife, who presented a perfect contrast to himself, clever and sharp witted, with administrative abilities that would almost rival Gen. Butler's. The two had jogged along, in an odd sort of fashion, for more than a quarter of a century. Mrs. Hoopes was rather proud of being "the minister's wife," although her husband's want of popularity was a constant eyerore to her. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he would have kept his place so long in the clerical ranks, had it not been for her influence.

He was already past the prime of life, when invited to take charge of the church belonging to his denomination in M—. Although it was a thriving place, yet the liberality of the people did not keep pace with their prosperity, and so the "Committee," appointed for the purpose, had selected Mr. Hoopes with an eye to economy. They thought he would answer for them, and familiar with his reputation, knew that he could not command a high salary.

There is such a thing however as being "penny wise and pound foolish." At least the people of M., who cared anything at all for their church, found it so to their cost. Poor Mr. Hoopes' sermons, though given with the best intentions, were found to answer better as soporifics for many of the country members, who came from a good distance and were often tired with the way, than as a usual means of convicting and converting sinners, and comforting saints. The principal feature about them was the number of their heads. Indeed, in this respect they somewhat resembled the fabled monster that Hercules vanquished, for no sooner was one head disposed of, than three more seemed to spring in its place.

From a large congregation, the church had dwindled to a mere handful. And even these few could not be brought together except on bright days. A rainy Sunday was a dismal time for the church. Mr. Hoopes' feeble voice was echoed back with a hollow, sepulchral sound, in his vain attempt to fill the dreary, because almost empty house. The few, who from a sense of duty, had braved the storm, went away depressed rather than cheered.

The only bright thing about the church was the Sunday-school. This, under the active, earnest, and much loved superintendent Dr. Brewster, had grown and flourished, almost in proportion as the church declined. Dr. Brewster had opposed the action of the Committee that called Mr. Hoopes. Not from any personal dislike towards the minister himself, but from love to the church. But when the matter was settled, he had submitted to the will of the majority with good grace, and since that time had done all he could to prevent the decline of his loved church. How he succeeded the Sunday-school showed. But after all, one man can only do one man's share in the work of life, and a good superintendent could not supply the place of a good minister.

Now it was only natural that Mrs. Hoopes

was not a very good friend to Dr. Brewster. Not that she would have confessed the fact, even to herself. She imagined that the only reason she preferred Dr. Walters as a physician, was that the latter belonged to another school of practice.

What was Dr. Brewster's surprise, therefore one morning, sometime before our story opens, on stopping at the house of Mrs. Matlock, to hear her say in her quiet way, "I suppose you have given up all hopes of poor Mr. Hoopes by this time?"

"Why! what has happened?" said the startled doctor, "I had not heard that he was sick."

"He has not been sick," she replied, "but he was found in a state of insensibility on the study floor this morning. Dr. Walters, I am told, pronounced it an attack of apoplexy. It is very strange you did not hear of it, the news was all over town before eight o'clock."

"I was later than usual getting out this morning, and this is the first place I have seen to yet, perhaps that is the reason," said the doctor.

He did not visit the next patient on his list, but went to the parsonage. There all the hurry and confusion that had reigned during the early part of the forenoon, had given place to the quiet of a house that Death had entered. The offer he came to make of any services that he could render, was not needed—the poor old minister was at rest.

CHAPTER II.

"My dear, I have concluded to accept the call."

"I am so glad, Frank," and little Mrs. Roby looked up, with a bright smile, into her husband's face, as he stooped to take the miniature likeness of himself from her lap.

"Yes, Fanny, I think it will be for the best, the salary is sufficient for our wants, and above all, I think I may be able to do good service for the Master, at M—"

But Mrs. Roby did not need to be told of the advantages of the new field of labor that Providence had opened before them. She had counted them over in her bright little head too often for that. However, as she looked upon her husband's judgment as something "more than human," the good little wife had done what is said to be always so difficult for a woman, held her peace. She was very much afraid that her personal likings might have too much influence in his decision. But now that the matter is settled, and Frank holds the baby while she makes the tea, what a comfort it is to talk all about the plans she could not help making even on the prospect of going to M—

While they are castle-building let me tell the reader how Mr. Frank Roby came to receive the call to M—

After the death of Mr. Hoopes, the pulpit had been supplied by a succession of preachers provided by the session, from time to time. During the life of the old minister, some of the members of that body had greatly regretted that they had not taken the advice of Dr. Brewster, one of their number, in the selection of their pastor. Consequently, when another was to be chosen the doctor's vote had a moral as well as numerical power in determining the matter. One of the supplies, as they called them, seemed to meet with especial favor. He was invited to preach again, and at last when the idea of inviting him to be their own minister was broached, nothing seemed to give the congregation more pleasure. The meeting called to consider the matter was crowded, and the motion to give the Rev. Frank Roby a call, was passed without a dissenting voice. Dr. Brewster then made a speech, in which he enlarged upon the prosperity and increasing wealth of the congregation, and moved that the salary of the minister be raised. This too was done, but not unanimously.

Before the arrival of the new family, the parsonage was nicely prepared for their reception by the ladies of the congregation. Encouraged by the unwonted spirit of liberality that prevailed, some of the more energetic ones had even succeeded in having some of the rooms re-papered. Mrs. Hoopes' feelings were not wounded by all this bustle of preparation. The sudden death of her husband had softened all hearts towards her. And as her successor had not yet come, she was still the recipient of many of those little attentions, that in the country generally fall to the minister's wife.

The fitting of the Roby family took place in the early autumn, and before winter they felt quite at home in their new quarters. Sociability is the characteristic of most country towns, and M— was no exception to the general rule. But the arrival of Mrs. Roby seemed to give a new impetus to the social element. She was invited to dinner-parties and tea-drinkings innumerable; and she formed the principal theme of conversation at others to which she was not invited. It was universally conceded, that she was quite pretty, had very pleasant manners and seemed almost to worship her husband.

Every thing seemed to promise favorably for the future of the church. Many who at first were brought to attend merely through curiosity, were moved by some influence inexplicable to themselves to come again. But the best way to give my readers a view of the case, will be by letting him take a peep with me into a little book that Mrs. Frank calls her diary. She does not keep it in the usual style, and write down under the date, a long account of the day's proceedings, as though she expected it would some day be published in her "Memoirs." But whenever she has had a particularly trying day with the baby, or has been more than usually worried with the many little, yet harassing cares of a housekeeper's life, cares that men neither appreciate nor understand, she unburdens her hearts to this best of confidants. It wouldn't do to worry Frank with such things, you know. Since she came to M—, such days seem to

be few and far between, and we find instead such little scraps as the following.

"I am so glad Frank came to M—. Everybody seems to love him so much. I like the people too, on my own account, they have been so kind to me. To-day Mrs. Matlock, one of the dearest old ladies, brought me a pretty saque for baby. What pleased me most of all, is that the church seems to be building up again. The attendance at even the week-day prayer-meetings is very good, and at nearly every communion, we have an encouraging number of new members added to us."

"To-day I heard that Dr. Brewster, one of our best friends, is going to California, on business, and will probably be away more than two years. We shall miss him very much. I don't see any one that can quite fill his place."

"Mrs. Hoopes came to see me to-day. She does not seem as friendly as at first. I fancy something has offended her, but cannot imagine what it is. Perhaps it is all fancy on my part, but, though I like M— very much, I cannot help thinking that it would have been pleasanter if Mrs. Hoopes had not been the other minister's wife." * * * *

Just here there is a long pause in the "diary." Let me improve it by explaining how the little cloud, no bigger than "a man's hand" that seems rising in Mrs. Roby's sky, was formed.

Mrs. Hoopes was a Christian, and intended to be a very good one. It was not, therefore, with a feeling of envy, exactly, that she looked upon the popularity and success of Mr. Roby. She could not help seeing that he was a far better preacher than Mr. Hoopes had been. But she thought if Mr. H's salary had been as good, he might have been encouraged to do better(?) It was also her opinion that as Mr. Roby was a young man, and had such a small family, he ought not to ask for such remuneration. So she came to the conclusion that there must be, as she expressed it, "a screw loose" somewhere, and set her wits to work to find it out.

Following out this resolution she made frequent visits to the parsonage, not at set times, but running in at all hours, much to Mrs. Roby's dismay. Mrs. Frank stood quite in awe of the lady, whose "notability" as a housewife was well known in town. Not that the little lady was at all lacking in such accomplishments, but as her family was small, she followed the fashion of most of the ladies in M—, gave out her washing, but was her own cook and housemaid. "A baby in the house," it is said, is "a well-spring of joy." Poor Mrs. Roby sometimes found hers a well-spring of mortification. It was often too cold for His Royal Highness in the kitchen, with its draughts from porch-door, cellar-door, and stair case. So mamma frequently had to bring her work, no matter what its character, into the parlor, that she might be able to do it, and attend to him at the same time. She loved the little fellow too well to mind the inconvenience to herself, but was terribly mortified one day, when Mrs. Hoopes found her making flannel cakes on the top of the parlor-stove while baby, highly pleased with the noise, was playing with the dust-pan and rolling-pin.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

THE MOTHER'S LAST GIFT;

OR, THE VALUE OF A SINGLE PENNY.

THIRTY years ago there was seen to enter the city of London a lad about fourteen years of age. He was dressed in a dark frock, that hid his under apparel, and which appeared to have been made for a person evidently taller than the wearer. His boots were covered with dust from the high road. He had on an old hat with a black band, which contrasted strangely with the color of the covering of his head. A small bundle, fastened to the end of a stick, and thrown over the shoulder, was the whole of his equipment. As he approached the Mansion House, he paused to look at the building, and seated himself on the steps of one of the doors. He was about to rest awhile; but the toming in and going out of half-a-dozen persons, before he had time to finish untying his bundle made him leave that spot for the next open space, where the doors were in part closed.

Having taken from the bundle a large quantity of bread and cheese, which he seemed to eat with a ravenous appetite, he amused himself by looking at the building before him, with all the eager curiosity of one unaccustomed to see similar objects.

The appearance of the youth soon attracted my curiosity, and gently opening the door, I stood behind him without his being the least conscious of my presence. He now began rummaging his pockets, and after a deal of trouble brought out a roll of paper, which he opened. After satisfying himself that a large copper coin was safe, he carefully put it back again, saying to himself, in a low voice, "Mother, I will remember your last words: 'A penny saved is twopence earned.' It shall go hard with me before I part with you, old friend."

Pleased with his remark, I gently touched the lad on the shoulder. He started, and was about to move away, when I said:

"My good lad, you seem tired, and likewise a stranger in the city."

"Yes, sir," he answered, putting his hand to his hat. He was again about to move forward.

"You need not hurry away, my boy," I observed. "Indeed, if you are a stranger, and willing to work, I can, perhaps, help to find what you require."

The boy stood mute with astonishment; and coloring to such an extent as to show all the freckles of a sunburnt face, stammered out:

"Yes, sir."

"I wish to know," I added, with all the kindness of manner I could assume, "whether

you are anxious to find work; for I am in want of a youth to assist my coachman."

The poor boy twisted his bundle about, and after having duly placed his hand to his head, managed to utter an awkward kind of an answer, that he would be very thankful.

I mentioned not a word about what I had overheard with regard to the penny, but inviting him into the house, I sent for the coachman, to whose care I entrusted the new comer.

Nearly a month had passed after this meeting and conversation occurred, when I resolved to make some inquiries of the coachman regarding the conduct of the lad.

"A better boy never came into the house, sir; and as for wasting anything, bless me, sir, I know not where he has been brought up, but I really believe he would consider it a sin if he did not give the crumbs of bread to the poor birds every morning."

"I am glad to hear so good an account," I replied.

"And as for his good nature, sir, there is not a servant among us that doesn't speak well of Joseph. He reads to us while we sup, and he writes all our letters for us. Oh, sir, he has got more learning than all of us put together; and what's more, he doesn't mind work, and never talks about our secrets after he writes our letters."

Determined to see Joseph myself, I requested the coachman to send him to the parlor.

"I understand, Joseph, that you can read and write."

"Yes, sir; thanks to my poor, dear mother."

"You have lately lost your mother, then?"

"A month that very day when you were kind enough to take me into your house, an unprotected orphan," answered Joseph.

"Where did you go to school?"

"Sir, my mother has been a widow ever since I can remember. She was a daughter of the village schoolmaster, and having to maintain me and herself with her needle, she took the opportunity of her leisure moments to teach me not only how to read and write, but to cast up accounts."

"And did she give you that penny, which was in the paper that I saw you unroll so carefully at the door?"

Joseph stood amazed, but at length replied with emotion, and a tear started from his eye.

"Yes, sir, it was the very last penny she gave me."

"Well, Joseph, so satisfied am I with your conduct, that not only do I pay you a month's wages willingly for the time you have been here, but I must beg of you to fulfil the duties of collecting clerk to our firm, which situation has become vacant by the death of a very old and faithful assistant."

Joseph thanked me in the most unassuming manner, and I was asked to take care of his money, since I had promised to provide him with suitable clothing for his new occupation.

It will be unnecessary to relate how, step by step, this poor lad proceeded to win the confidence of myself and partner. The accounts were always correct to a penny; and whenever his salary became due, he drew out of my hands no more than he absolutely wanted, even to a penny. At length he had saved a sufficient sum of money to be deposited in the bank.

It so happened that one of our chief customers, who carried on a successful business, required an active partner. This person was of eccentric habits, and considerably advanced in years. Scrupulously just, he looked to every penny, and invariably discharged his workmen, if they were not equally scrupulous in their dealings with him.

Aware of this peculiarity of temper, there was no person I could recommend but Joseph; and after overcoming the repugnance of my partner who was unwilling to be deprived of so valuable an assistant, Joseph was duly received into the firm of Richard, Fairbrothers & Co. Prosperity attended Joseph in this new undertaking, and never suffering a penny difference to appear in his transactions, he so completely won the confidence of his senior partner, that he left him the whole of his business, as he expressed it in his will, "even to the very last penny."

THE ABSENT LORD.

My Lord was taken from me: day by day
My heart grew sadder with the sins it bore,
While many dulcet voices came to say,
Why weepst thou? If he come back no more,
Give o'er thy sorrow, needless at the best.
So I their call obeyed,
And knew not, yet would know where he was laid,
And could not be at rest.

I was a wanderer thence from place to place;
I questioned some who sat within the gate,
And saw the play of the incredulous face;
On others scanned the look of scorn and hate
My heart grew hard,—I say not how or why,—
While oft my search was stayed;
And then I cared not where my Master laid,
Or would His name be dely.

Thus in the day I could my loss forget,
Or He has crowded from me by the press;
At night, my soul with many fears beset,
Would oft with tears its shame and loss confess,
And sick, alone, afraid,
Cry out, O world, tell where my Lord is laid,
Or let me love thee less.

One time I thought on Peter in the hall,
And soon of Mary waiting at the grave,
Then of the smiting of the thren'ning Saul,—
And was not Jesus near to help and save?
O light that came, and why the long delay?
I had my Lord conveyed
Afar, forgetting where He had been laid;
And gone upon my way.

My way, and he had risen to follow me,—
Me all unworthy, ne'er by him forgot;
O wondrous love, that could so patient be!
My eyes were holden that I knew him not!
Peace came at last, as to the twain that day
Who from Jerusalem strayed;
And while they talked of where He had been laid,
He met them by the way!

NO HEATHEN AT HOME.

BY REV. JOHN TODD, D.D.

Mr. Oldtimes was a good neighbor, a good citizen, and a pretty good Christian, though not a very enlightened one. He lived out of the village some three miles, but very seldom was he absent from the house of God on the Sabbath. It must be a very powerful rain or a very deep snow that prevented his being early in his pew. He would contribute to some objects, but others he would turn his back upon. The very contribution-box seemed to know when to stop at his pew, and when to go past. The cause of Foreign Missions was one to which he never gave; and yet it sometimes seemed as if his conscience gave him twinges, for after the collection was made he always wanted to talk about it, and prove that it was all a wrong system.

"Neighbor Hamilton," said he one day, just after such a collection had been taken up, "now what's the use, or the propriety, of sending off our money to convert the heathen, when we have so many heathen at home?"

"Heathen at home? Where are they?"

"Where are they? Why, everywhere! The town is full of them. Take my own neighborhood, and there is not more than one family in seven that pretends to go to church as a stated thing. When these are all converted, or even got to meeting, it will be soon enough to send the Gospel out of the country."

"Yes, I know; but how long shall we have to wait? When will these go to the house of God? There are churches of almost all shades of opinion, none of them full, and yet to none of these will they go. It was just so with their fathers. It has been so for three generations. If we wait for these to become a church-going people, we must wait a great while. Have you ever tried to persuade them to attend?"

"Tried? Yes, over and over again. They don't want to go, and they won't go. I call them heathen."

"Yes, but they are not heathen."

"Why not? Why don't they need the Gospel as much as the heathen?"

"They do; but the difference is, that they have the Gospel, and the heathen have not. The difference is, they have and reject it; but the heathen have not the offer of life. Look at your own neighborhood for example. Just see what light they have!

"In the first place, every family has a Bible. They would think you insulted them should you ask if they have the Scriptures in their houses—the Bible, containing God's own teaching to a lost world, full, complete, given by inspiration of God, holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. This Bible carries light enough to save every soul of them all, if they would read and obey it.

"In the second place, they have the Sabbath. There is not one of them who does not know that this is the Lord's day, appointed for rest and for worship. There is not one of them who may not hear the church-bells every Sabbath; and they know these are so many sweet invitations to go up to the house of the Lord, to worship with God's people, and hear the message of salvation. They can all go, and would be welcomed if they would, by Christ and his people.

"In the third place, they all see you and your family go to church every Sabbath. Your example is an invitation and a reproof to them; for they know that you are a better man, your family is better educated, and every way more respectable, for your habit of keeping the Sabbath. Every time you ride past their houses your example preaches a sermon to them.

"In the next place, they know that there is a Sabbath-school in every church in town, where they have large and valuable libraries, where the best men and women instruct and labor for the good of the children; they know that your children show the advantages of the Sabbath-school, and that their prospects for life are altogether better, to say nothing about the salvation of the soul, in consequence of their having been brought up in such a school.

"Then, again, they all know there is a Saviour, who He is, where He came from, what He did, where He now is, and what He is doing. They all know He has a living Church, always has had, and always will have. They all know that this Church is sending out missionaries at home and abroad; that she has ministers at home (and very anxious are they to have a Christian minister at all their funerals); that this Church has tracts, and religious papers, and magazines, and books, and everything to help them and their children. They all know this, and know, too, that every one of them might enjoy every blessing which the Church scatters.

"Now the heathen have no one thing of all this. They have no Bible, no Sabbath, no solemn worship, no Sabbath-schools, no Christian families or Christian example, no churches, and they know nothing of Christ. They can't become Christians. But your neighbors—they are not heathen. They are rejecters of the Gospel of Christ. They see where the light is, but will not come to it. You see the difference, Mr. Oldtimes, don't you?"

"Well, I will say you have put it in a pretty strong light. I never looked at the thing in that way. I will think it over; and if I see it to-morrow as it looks to-day, you needn't wonder if, after all, I send you over a little something to go to Foreign Missions."—*Sunday Magazine.*