

The Family Circle.

THE CORNER-STONE.

There is a Jewish tradition, that at the building of the Temple one stone sorely puzzled the builders, and could not be fitted into the wall, till at last it was discovered to be intended for the corner-stone. The Jews suppose, Ps. cxviii, 22, to refer to this, and the incident to be typical of the Messiah.

When on the chosen Mount arose Jehovah's Temple, fair, No sound of axe, or hammer broke The awful stillness there.

The cedars felled on Lebanon, Were there with patience wrought; Each stone was hewn and polished, ere It to the Mount we brought.

But when the builders came to view The stones, thus cut and dressed, One block among the others lay, Differing from all the rest.

The workmen vainly strove to find Its place within the wall, Yet when they left it out, their work No progress made, at all;

Till, when all other plans were tried, One way remained alone— The once rejected block they sought To be the Corner-Stone.

They brought it to its rightful place With silent, anxious care, And then a joyful shout was heard From every builder there!

Upon Moriah's Mount no more Jehovah's Temple stands, Its golden roof no longer shines The glory of all lands.

Yet still the Lord hath not withdrawn His presence from our race; A nobler temple rises now To celebrate His grace.

Each stone is hewn with patient care, Ere to its place 'tis brought, No sound of axe, or hammer tells The world, what there is wrought.

The stone the builders once refused Is our Chief Corner-Stone; From age to age the work proceeds, And now 'tis almost done.

Time shall not on its beauty prey, It fears no earthquake shock; Its living stones are firmly placed On Christ the Living Rock.

Other foundation none can lay Save Jesus Christ alone. We to the builders who refuse God's precious Corner-Stone! —The Churchman.

LUTE MERRIL.

Lute Merrill's father was rich. Yes, he was very rich; for he was a banker in one of our largest and most prosperous cities; and so Lute had almost everything she desired. I know it would do some of your poor children good, just to get a peep into her play-room. For it looked something like a toy-shop at Christmas time, only a great deal nicer. For it had a soft, beautiful carpet on the floor; then there was an easy little rocking chair and foot-stool, just the right size for Lute, besides lots of good comfortable things that you never do see in a toy-shop. Then the walls were hung with costly pictures, such as only a rich man's daughter could have. Now I have been telling you all this about Lute, just because I wished to tell you of one of the beautiful pictures that hung in her play-room. Although there was one, representing a scene in Switzerland, that glorious land where the Alpine mountains are, and one of a pleasant valley where the farmer dwelt in ease and plenty, and the portraits of her father and mother, besides that of her dear brother Clarence, who was such a merry handsome fellow, yet over the mantle hung the one that I loved.

Now I wonder if any of you little folks know the true meaning of the word lady? Do you know that a great many who are called ladies in these days, are not worthy of so great and good a name; for some of them are so selfish and unkind. All you little bright-eyed girls, gathered in the homes of America, if you were to be ladies, you must each one be "lady of bread," for that is the meaning of the word. And this is why we should all think of Mrs. Cotta as a true lady; for she cared for Martin Luther so tenderly. When he was a poor little fellow singing through the streets of that German town of Erfurt, she gave him bread to eat.

So over the mantle in Lute Merrill's play-room is a picture of a lady in the olden time, standing at the gateway of her castle-home, distributing bread to the poor who gather there. Three ragged little children are scampering home as fast as they can, with their burden of bread, which will soon be turned into a blessing for them all, when their mother gives to each one his share. One poor old woman is actually kissing the hand of the lady, who is such a kind friend to her, and upon the lady's face there rests a sweet look of quiet peace and joy; I trust such a happy look as the consciousness of doing good will spread over the most homely countenance, thereby transfiguring its roughness into lines of beauty. The name of this interesting picture is "The Lady." Lute often sits rocking herself before the bright fire, and while she warms her feet her eyes are often fixed upon the lady in the picture. And she dreams little day-dreams of all she will do, when she comes into full possession of that strange future which is widening before her every day. Indeed she is thinking of what she will do when she is a young lady. Her cousin Laura is called a young lady, and she is so tall and handsome, and dresses so gaily, that Lute almost

always wants to be like her. Then there is Florence Graves, what good times she does have, since she has put on long dresses, and can go to parties, and do as she pleases. For Florence told Lute just the other day, when she wished to go down street with her, and mamma thought it almost too cold, she told her "never to mind, in a few more years she would be a young lady and then she could do as she pleased," and Lute had hid that saying away in her heart, with a naughty thought toward mamma for requiring her obedience now.

But Lute was soon to learn a more beautiful lesson of life, than that of "doing as she pleased," and this is how she learned it.

One day Lute's mamma sent for her to come into the parlor, and there she found her dear aunt Lute, waiting for a welcome from her little namesake. Lute had never seen her aunt before, as she had been living in the South for a number of years. Aunt Lute Merrill was so kind and good, that her niece soon loved her dearly. And so, during her visit which extended over several months of the bright summer-time, they had many a good talk in the play-room together, or as they walked side by side in the suburbs of the city. Aunt Lute was a true Christian lady, and what wonder then, that day by day she taught her little namesake the secret of true ladyhood. Now as Lute sits before her picture she sees it in a truer, dearer light, and her sole aim is to be a true lady, even such as God would have her be.

Oh! how I wish every little girl was striving to obtain the strong, true title of "A Christian Lady."—Reformed Church Messenger.

"IT DOES ME NO GOOD."

"It does me no good to attend church. I never feel any better for the service. I would not go, if it were not to please my mother," said Harry Jones. "Do you never hear any thing which affords you encouragement, or strengthens your good resolutions?" "No, never. I have been to church ever since I was a child, and I am no better for it."

"I can scarcely imagine how any one can hear the sermons you listen to, and not feel better for so doing." "The fact is, I never hear the sermons. I am always thinking of something else. I have some plan for Monday, some past pleasure to live over again, or something which I am resolved to execute in the future."

Miss Brown looked grave. "I have shocked you, I knew I should, but going to church is the most irksome business in my life."

"Perhaps if you would listen attentively to the sermon, you would not find it so. Promise me that the next Sabbath you will attend and listen attentively, and will give me an account of the sermon afterwards."

Harry hesitated, but finally promised to do as his friend wished. The next Sabbath the text was, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." In the sermon the minister endeavored to show that there was need of personal exertion in order to be a faithful follower of Christ. He could not sit down idle with folded hands, and dream of being good, expecting to "be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease." We must rouse ourselves, and work with all our might; we must "strive to enter in at the strait gate," leaving our burden at Jesus' feet as we pass the narrow entrance, trusting in his grace alone to help us.

This sermon, Harry acknowledged to his friend, "was really worth hearing." "Yet," said Miss Brown, "it was no better than usual, only you went to listen. You find it was not the fault of the preaching, but that of the hearing which failed to do you good. If we would be benefited, we must listen attentively, and prayerfully meditate upon what we have heard. If we do this, we shall seldom find cause for censure."

A TOUCHING INCIDENT.

The pastor of a young mother who had recently joined his church was talking with her about her maternal responsibilities, and urged the duty of constant and believing prayer for the early conversion of her children. She assured him that it was her daily practice to carry her little ones in supplication to the throne of grace, and yet complained of a want of faith and of definiteness in asking for them the special influences of the Holy Spirit.

"Do you pray for each child separately, and by name?" inquired the pastor. "No, that has never been my habit," was the reply.

"I think it of much importance, Mrs. Huston, especially as a help to our faith, and to the clearness and intensity of our desires on their behalf. You pray with them, I trust, as well as for them?"

"Sometimes I do, but not often. They seem a little restless, and inclined to whisper together, while my eyes are closed; and so I have felt less embarrassment and more freedom in supplication to be alone at such seasons."

"Let me persuade you, dear Mrs. Huston, to try a different plan. Take your little son and daughter each separately to the place of prayer, and kneeling with them before the Lord, tell him the name, the daily history, the special want of each, and see, if your heart is not opened to plead for them as you have never done before."

Tears were in the eyes of the young mother as she said with trembling lips, "I'll try."

As evening came she had not forgotten her promise, but as she saw that Sarah, her daughter, was unusually peevish, she thought best to take her little son first to her chamber. Willie was a bright and pleasant boy of five years; and when his mother whispered her wish to pray with him, he gladly

put his hand in hers and knelt by her side. As he heard his name mentioned before the Lord, a tender hush fell upon his young spirit, and he clasped his mother's fingers more tightly as each petition for his special need was breathed into the ear of his Father in heaven. And did not the clinging of that little hand warm her heart to new and more fervent desire as she poured forth her supplication to the hearer and answerer of prayer?

When the mother and child rose from their knees, Willie's face was like a rainbow, smiling through tears. "Mamma, mamma," said he, "I'm glad you told Jesus my name; now he'll know me when I get to heaven. And when the kind angels that carry little children to the Saviour, take me and lay me in his arms, Jesus will look at me so pleasant, and say, 'Why, this is Willie Huston; his mother told me about him: how happy I am to see you, Willie.' Won't that be nice, mamma?"

Mrs. Huston never forgot that scene. And when she was permitted to see not only her dear Willie and Sarah, but the children afterwards added to her family circle, each successively consecrating the dew of their youth to God, she did indeed feel that her pastor's plan was "the more excellent way." So she resolved to recommend it to praying mothers by telling them this touching incident. When we meet our children at the last great day, may Jesus own as his those whom we have "told him about" on earth.

LITTLE LILLIE WAS RIGHT.

One day a lady was teaching a class of little girls in Sunday School. "My dear children, she said, "how soon may we give our hearts to God, and become true Christians?"

"They didn't answer at first. Then she spoke to them one by one. Turning to the oldest scholar in the class, she asked:

"What do you say, Mary?"

"When we are thirteen."

"What do you say, Jane?"

"When we are ten."

"What do you say, Susan?"

"When we are six."

At last she came to little Lillie, the youngest scholar in the class.

"Well, Lillie," she said, "and how soon do you think we may give our hearts to God?"

"Just as soon as we feel that we are sinners, and know who God is," said Lillie.

How beautiful an answer that was! and how true! Yes, "as soon as you feel that you are a sinner, and know who God is," you may give him your heart, and become a Christian.

DEATH—ITS MYSTERY AND ITS COMPENSATION.

BY REV. AUSTIN PHELPS, D.D.

The whole conception of death is evidently superhuman. If we approach it, as we would a device of human strategy, we find it to be a frightfully impracticable subject to our reason. What is it? Why is it? Whence is it? Our human insight here is blank blindness. Our lips are dumb. Philosophy has tried very hard to look coolly upon the grim fact. Poetry has done its best to garish graves for us. Taste invents new names for our coffins, and affection decks them with flowers. Art has painted us all as heroes in dying. Probably all men have chivalrous moods over the prospect.

Yet, of the hundred and forty generations which this earth has taken back to its dust, not one man, woman or child would ever have chosen the process of dissolution as the method of a change of worlds, even admitting a change to be desirable or necessary. Madame Swetchine says that "if life were perfectly beautiful, death would still be perfectly desirable." No, not death; a transfer to other worlds might be, but not death; this no human ingenuity can adorn or soften. It is to every human instinct what Milton paints it, a "grizzly terror." No philosopher would ever have originated it as a wise expedient. No philanthropist would ever have forecast it as a benevolent one. Even as a primitive infliction, it would never have been devised by a humane jurist as an indiscriminate necessity. As a symbol of certain ethical ideas, why should it be the law of all sentient beings? Christian faith aside, it is shockingly suggestive of a malignant, or a possibly maniacal origin. Even the instincts of brutes are bewildered by it, as they are by earthquakes. It should seem as if the very constitution of things, of which those instincts are a part, were shattered by the phenomenon. Benevolence would appear to have succumbed to frenzy; Revelation presents to our faith no dogma more inscrutable than this fact in the system of nature. When infidelity will explain it to us, we may safely promise to explain everything else with which our religion has to do.

But a device like this, of physical and moral government, cannot have been ordained by a benevolent God without being in some way interwoven with beneficent results proportioned to the gigantic mystery. God's system of the universe is largely a system of balanced opposites. The seeming evil is always at least kept in poise by a good of equal weight, growing out of it. In an eternal reckoning, the right scale preponderates immensely. As the richest soil gathers in the bed of inundations, and the choicest vines grow in the pulverized debris of volcanoes; so in the moral world, character lies over against temptation; atonement against sin.

On the same principle, death must be an element in the government of the universe of unspeakable value somewhere. Its untold horrors must be at least fully equated by blessings springing from it somehow. The dark side of the circle of equivalents is turned this way, so that we seem to live under a dread eclipse; but who shall say how it appears all around the universe, except the brief segment which we look at?

"We may one day see—what we now hold

by faith only—the love of God as signally displayed in death-struggles, in the varieties of torture by which the phenomenon is made shocking to us, and in the unutterable repulsions of the grave, as we now see it in a violet. We cannot conceive at present how amiable the primitive element in death will by-and-by appear to us, nor how tranquilly we shall sympathize with it. Eye hath not seen how beautiful it will be to us as an ethical symbol. We cannot now make real to ourselves how sacred suffering is a necessity to character, nor how gratefully we shall remember it. Even the experience of resurrection, though limited to the twinkling of an eye, may be more than the compensatory opposite of dying. To a good man, there may be an ecstasy in the one process which is not possible, except as the sequence of humiliation in the other. That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. The Christian idea of victory over death may, in its fullness, be inconceivable, except through the experience of dying. We are more than conquerors, only through the suffering of seeming defeat.

It is very unphilosophical to reason cheerlessly about the stern methods of God. Still less are we sensible men if we reason sullenly. We have only to spring to the Divine side of everything which we know but in part and rest there.—Watchman and Reflector.

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