

The Family Circle.

[For the American Presbyterian.]

THREE YEARS AGO.

BY MRS. N. E. MORSE.

Three years ago! The day has come, Just as it dawned upon us there—

Three years ago the Sabbath smiled Upon us all with balmy breath—

"When all are gone to church," she said, "We'll have a peaceful quiet time;

Three years ago! How clear to me Come back the memories of that hour,

And then she slipped her little hand In mine and said: "I love you so!"

Once rousing up, her thoughtful eye Lit up with gratitude and love,

Once in the night she clasped her hands, And on the solemn midnight air,

And so the dark night slowly went, And the cold sleep and wind moaned on,

Why do I weep? If words of mine Could call her back to this poor earth,

For such were ever hers to give. Her gentle spirit would not leave

Three years ago, Death seemed to stand With greasy eyes our bench beside,

Within one grave they lie at rest— They who so fondly loved before—

Three years! How often in that time All busy with some household care,

But Faith—that comforter divine— With radiant hand had pointed me

Three years ago, they left me—fair And beautiful, their winning ways,

DON MARTIN.

AN OLD SPANISH LEGEND.

Now, Don Martin was—the Devil! And this name he went by, once—centuries and centuries ago—in Spain.

A rich man became quite poor, and the loss of his money made him very wretched.

It was the Devil, Now, the Evil One knew very well what was passing in the man's mind;

"No use in you knowing," said the man; "for you could do nothing to help me."

"But," retorted the Devil, "I'll show you that I am able to help you, if only you will do all that I want of you."

"What are you?" asked the man. "I am the Devil," said the Tempter.

Now when the man heard this name he was afraid. But the Devil knows how to soothe the fears of those who have half a mind to serve him;

"So it is," says the ancient author, "that the Devil always knows his time to make men fall into his snares."

As soon as this contract between the fiend and the man was settled, the Devil told him that he must become a robber,

"But if I should be taken prisoner?" asked the man.

"Then," answered the Devil, "cry out, 'Help me, Don Martin,' and I will come and set you free."

Calmed and nerved by these promises, the man went and broke into the house of a rich merchant.

Again and again, aided by the Tempter, he entered the dwellings of the rich and robbed them;

But here the Devil came to his assistance and released him.

As soon as he was out he returned to his old life, and it was not long before he was again in prison.

"Help me, Don Martin!" he cried. But, somehow, Don Martin was not so prompt as he had been before;

He was once more arrested; and this time Don Martin failed him.

Yet, after sentence was passed, Don Martin once more placed him at liberty in the name of the king.

"Again," writes the old author, "this man returned to his old courses, and again was taken prisoner."

The man then told Don Martin that this was no child's play, for his delay had caused him dreadful alarm.

Don Martin replied that he had brought five hundred maravedi in an alms-bag to bribe the judge with and so get the release of his friend and servant.

As the jailors were making preparations to hang the criminal, there seemed to be some trouble about finding a stout rope;

"And then," says the chronicler, "the judge after a short time, turning to the people, said: 'My friends, did you ever see a rope wanting when the man is really guilty?'"

"This, we are told, the judge did to gain time to count the money in the bag."

But what was the judge's surprise and rage, when on opening the bag, he found, not a bribe, but a rope.

He at once ordered the man to be hanged, and had the rope in the bag put round his neck.

"Help me, Don Martin!" shrieked the robber. The Devil appeared.

"Help me, D-o-n-M-a-r-t-i-n—" The rope was choking him.

"Can't do it! Sorry; but can't do it," said the Devil: "When once a rope is round a man's neck, can't help him."

"And," says Don Manuel, who tells the story, "the consequence was that the culprit met the fate which awaited him, losing thereby both soul and body, from not resisting the temptation of the Devil; such being the fate of all those who rely upon false aid and delay their repentance."

This story is not an idle fable. It is the shadow of a great truth, which every one who scans the ways of men in the world can see to-day as clearly as it was seen twenty centuries ago.

Bad men often prosper, and good men sometimes seem to be crushed under the Juggernaut wheels of society.

"Who doth not trust in God repose Evil his life and sad its close!"

"NOT NOW." James W— sat in his father's office reading an interesting paper.

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"So it is," says the ancient author, "that the Devil always knows his time to make men fall into his snares."

trained the old man sinks down overcome with the exertion. His history has often been written. In his youth, kind friends and the voice of conscience urged him to read his Bible, but, his answer was, Not Now.

"How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and ye would not." RITA.

THE RED PEPPERS. In a basket of seeds and vegetables that had just arrived from the country was a string of bright red peppers, which immediately attracted the attention of James Anthon, a boy of four years, who had come in with his mother, while I was unpacking the basket.

"O mamma," he exclaimed, "what shining red things! How very pretty they are! May I have them to play with, mamma?"

"They are not playthings, my dear," she answered; "neither are they good for little boys. Besides, they are very hot."

James opened wide his big black eyes. "Hot, mamma? Why, there is no fire," and, reaching out a chubby finger, he softly touched one of the peppers, as though he feared it might burn him: exclaiming, in a triumphant tone, "There, mamma, the pretty red thing is cold! May I not hold it in my hand one little minute?"

Now I am sorry to say that James, like a great many little boys and girls I know, loved to have his own way; and it was very hard for him to give up anything that he had set his heart upon.

And so the subject was dropped. I was called from the room, and Mrs. Anthon was busy with her sewing, when all at once I heard a loud scream from James.

He had slyly crept up to the table, and had taken possession of one of the scarlet playthings he had so long been coveting, and was speedily finding out, to his bitter cost, what his mother meant when she called them "hot."

His plump little hands were smarting as though they had been plunged into the fire, and big tears were rolling down his cheeks.

I got a basin of cold water, and dipped into it a soft linen cloth, which I laid again and again upon his flushed and swollen face and burning hands; his mother telling him, that, another time he must remember she knew better than he did what a little boy ought to do, and that now he was punished for being disobedient, and for persisting in having his own way.

I did not see James Anthon for several years after that little adventure,—nor till he was a tall, manly-looking lad. I asked him if he had forgotten the red peppers. He blushed scarlet, and turned towards his mother with a tender smile.

"I am happy to say he never has forgotten them; and whenever he has attempted to have his own way, and to set up his own will against mine, I have said, 'Red peppers, James,' and he has instantly given up."—Child at Home.

REMARKABLE SUCCESSES. A writer in London Society contributes an article on "Luck in Families," in which he gives sketches of several characters whose lives have been marked by instances of singular good fortune or good management, or a happy combination of the two.

"There is a man in the west of England—the story is well known there—who took a thousand shares in a mine, and never had to pay more than a pound apiece for them; and on those shares he lived sumptuously; and out of the income of those shares he bought an estate for a hundred thousand pounds, and, finally, he sold those shares for a half million of money.

There is a man in Berkshire, who has got a park with a walled frontage of seven miles; and he tells of a beautiful little operation which made a nice little addition to his fortune.

He was in Australia when the first discoveries of gold were made. The miners brought in their nuggets, and took them to the local banks. The bankers were a little nervous about the business, uncertain about the quality of the gold, and waiting to see its character established.

"It is to be observed here that what we call luck is resolvable very often into what is really observation and knowledge, and a happy tact in applying them when a sudden opportunity arises.

Have you lost your pocket book, Bro. Prudence? [Prudence elaps his hand suddenly on his pocket.] Don't be alarmed. You left it at home and brought only a little wallet, for fear, as you said, that your feelings would get the better of your judgment. You needn't be so prudent. Your benevolent feelings are the last thing to get beyond your control.

Drop that veil over your face, Mrs. Display. You'll need it to hide your blushes while I tell the congregation that you have not given me so much this year as you have paid out for those ear rings and that point-face handkerchief, and, here, to-day, you have been thinking about buying a \$500 diamond ring. And you profess to love the Saviour, and the heathen who are perishing for want of His gospel!

What now shall be said to you, the richest man in the whole society, a member of the church, a teacher in the Sunday school, a regular attendant at the prayer-meeting? I see I don't need to name you. [Dr. Pe-nurious is hitching nervously in his pew in the broad aisle.] You speak and pray well. You have much to say of sound doctrine and liberality and consecration to Christ. But, whenever you are asked to give, you always say, 'I have too many calls, too many calls.' Yes, but they get no answers. If you answered any of them liberally, I could excuse you. To-day you have given me one dollar, when fifty dollars would have been nearer

to India, and, while he was still a young man, he accumulated a considerable fortune. He saw that hardly any about him knew the native languages, so he applied himself to the hard work of mastering them, and turned the knowledge to most profitable account.

On one occasion, when all the gunpowder had failed the British army, he succeeded in scraping together a large amount of the necessary materials, and manufactured it for our troops.

When he returned to England he canvassed with so much ability and earnestness for a seat in the East India Directorate, that he might carry out his scheme of reform, that, though he failed to get the vote of a certain large proprietor of stock, he won his daughter's heart, and made a prosperous marriage.

Ah! marriage is, after all, the luckiest bit of luck when it is all it should be! When Henry Baring, the late Lord Ashburton, traveled in America—not merely dilettante traveling, but, like Lord Milton in our days, piercing into untraveled wilds, meeting only a stray, enthusiastic naturalist, like Audubon—he made his marriage with Miss Bingham, and so consolidated the American business of the great house of Baring.

In an international point of view, this was a happy marriage, for in after years it gave him a peculiar facility for concluding the great Ashburton treaty.

"We have just seen with universal satisfaction a great lady added to the peerage of Great Britain. Mr. Disraeli dedicated one of his works to the 'severest of critics, but a perfect wife'; and at the Edinburgh banquet he told the guests how much he owed to his matchless wife. It is no secret how much of his fortunes he owed to her help, and how greatly he benefited by her sympathy and wisdom.

The husband whom she so helped in his youthful struggles for fortune, has, in return, made her a peeress, and we all wish happiness and long life to the Viscountess Beaconsfield. So lucky has Mr. Disraeli been in his wife, that it is hardly worth while alluding to the minor and subordinate circumstance that an old lady, a stranger, some years ago, left him a legacy of thirty or forty thousand pounds, through admiration of his public character."

THE CONTRIBUTION BOX. An agent had addressed the congregation, a contribution had been taken, and the pastor was about to pronounce the benediction, when all were startled by a voice from the Contribution Box, which the deacon had just placed on the table:

"Wait a moment, good friends, and give me a chance to speak. I have long had something on my mind, and must unburden myself. The truth is, I am much abused. Sometimes for weeks together I am allowed no part in all your Sunday services, though prayers and alms should come up together for a 'memorial before God.' But I am tucked away out of sight, where I get only dust and cobwebs.

"Worse, still, are my grievances when I am allowed to come around from pew to pew in aid of your devotions. I always come with a heart full of good will, ready to confer on you all the great blessings of giving. Yet, oh, what treatment! I don't mean now the tricks of fun-loving boys, who give me old buttons for pennies. I can put up with their mischief, especially as I never get so full but that I can carry a few buttons extra.

But I do mean you for one, Mr. Blind. Why do you never see me when I come? Your face is turned toward the Orchestra, or you are hunting for something in the hymn book, or your head is down, as though you had, just then, an extra touch of devotion. If it had been by accident, you would have sought me after service. But you hurried out right after the benediction. How much of the benediction did you carry home? You're rightly named Blind, for 'none are so blind as those that won't see.' [Mr. Blind here put his head down out of sight.]

Closest, you put in this torn bill. You knew it would be at a discount at the bank. Don't tell me it was accidental. You have done the same thing before, and it isn't for want of a whole one, either. You had better go home and read what Rev. Dr. Malachi says in one of his discourses, about the man who brought that which was 'torn' as an offering to the Lord.

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your share. You have a 'call' to study that book which says, 'covetousness is idolatry.' And soon you'll have another 'call' which you must answer, to leave those money bags and go and settle accounts with Him who owns them all.

Now I have something for you all to hear. When, at the end of last year, you footed up the contributions of the church, and said it was quite a fair sum, I ached to tell you that your pastor and a ministerial secretary in the church, from their slender incomes, had given full one-third of the whole. It would have been still more but for Bro. Whole-souled and Bro. Generous, who are always liberal. And Mrs. Humble, too, dear good woman, let me not forget her: the five dollar bill she put in was fragrant with prayer and love and self-denial, and shed a sweet perfume through the whole. 'She hath done what she could.' There was a quarter, too, that dropped most lovingly from the little fingers that had made themselves weary in earning it. Ah! dear Mary, we shall want you for a missionary by and by.

My good friends, the agents, [turning towards the pulpit] often mortify me. They are dry—don't give fresh facts—don't feel the facts they do give, or affect to feel them so much they weary and disgust folks. They don't know when to stop; talking an hour when forty minutes would open purses wider. I've seen many an X at forty minutes changed for a V at fifty, and for an I at sixty.

The dear pastor is sometimes too timid, and instead of seconding the agent's appeal with all his eloquence, will say that he hopes the people, though they have given to so many objects, have a little left for this good cause, when the truth is few have denied themselves a pin for their contributions.

I have one secret more to tell. I am something more than I seem to be. You think me only a wooden box—a convenience for gathering up your donations. Know, then, that a messenger from your Saviour is here. Yes, I represent His pierced hand outstretched toward you, and your returns to me are registered as an index of your love for Him. As I pass from pew to pew I gather something more than money. These tales of your secret history, and a thousand others, are all put on record, and will be read in that day before the great congregation."

The voice ceased, and the good pastor, in tones trembling with emotion, said, "Let us all pray for pardon before the benediction."—Selected.

A SILVER WEDDING INCIDENT.—A pastor's wife in the State of New York treats us to this bit of ministerial experience. In a thrifty town, that shall here be nameless, the pastor's silver wedding approached. He held a warm corner in the hearts of the young people, and they raised by subscription among themselves a generous present for the occasion. This money fell into the hands of two good deacons, who put their shrewd financiering heads together and agreed that it would be a nice thing to "keep" the silver wedding by wiping out the several years' arrears on the minister's salary, and that this sum would nearly do it! The happy thought was acted on, and during the evening Deacon Blank made a little speech, congratulating the young people, and the rest assemblé, that nearly enough had been raised to cancel this unpleasant deficit, but giving no mention of the circumstances under which the money was raised.

The Advance is assured of the actuality of this incident, but is as ignorant of its locality as of the proper adjective to apply to it!

PAUL GERHARD'S TRUST.—The pious Lutheran minister at Berlin, Paul Gerhard, was deposed from his office and banished the country in 1686 by the Elector Frederic William the Great, on account of the faithful discharge of his ministerial duties. Not knowing whither to go, he and his wife passed out of the city, and finally stopped at a tavern, oppressed with care and grief. Gerhard endeavored to comfort his partner by that text, Psalm xxxvii. 5: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." He then went into the garden adjoining the tavern in order to commune with God concerning the cares that weighed him down. Seating himself in an arbor and taking out his pocket-book, he composed that beautiful hymn, while his soul was filled with the peace of God and a holy confidence:

Commit thou every grievance Into His faithful hands, To His sure care and guidance Who heaven and earth commands; For He, the cloud's Director, Whom winds and seas obey, Will be thy kind protector, And will prepare thy way, etc.

Having finished the hymn, he presented it to his still deeply disconsolate wife. She had not yet finished its perusal, when two gentlemen entered the guest room, who forthwith commenced a conversation with Gerhard, informing him that Duke Christian of Merseburg had deputed them to invite a certain deposed minister of Berlin, named Gerhard, to call on him. Light and joy now beamed from the countenances of Gerhard and his wife, who were to be graciously rewarded for their trust in God! Gerhard travelled to Merseburg, received a pension from the Duke, and in 1699 was appointed Archdeacon at Lueben, in the province of Niederlausitz. The aforesaid hymn in after years fell into the hands of the Elector of Prussia, and made such a deep impression on his mind that he asked his prime minister who was the author thereof. "The same Paul Gerhard," replied the minister, "whom your Excellency banished the country." The Elector felt alarmed and deeply grieved at the injustice he had done to Gerhard.

A person must have dug deep in poverty of spirit, if he takes not occasion from others' trespasses to enhance his own reputation.