

The Family Circle.

PREVENTING MERCIES.

BY HUGH MACMILLAN. Psalm lxxix. 8.

The hawthorn hedge that keeps us from intruding, Looks very fierce and bare, When stripped by winter, every branch protruding Its thorns that wound and tear.

But spring-time comes; and like the rod that budded, Each twig breaks out in green; And cushions soft of tender leaves are studded, Where spines alone are seen.

And honeysuckle, its bright wreath upbearing, The prickly top adorns; Its golden trumpets victory declaring, Of blossoms over thorns.

Nature in this mute parable unfoldeth, A lesson sweet to me; God's goodness in reproof my eye beholdeth And His severity.

There is no grievous chastening but combineth Some brightness with the gloom; Round every thorn in the flesh there twineth Some wreath of softening bloom.

The sorrows that to us seem so perplexing Are mercies kindly sent, To guard our wayward souls from sadder vexing, And greater ills prevent.

Like angels stern they meet us when we wander Out of the narrow track, With sword in hand, and yet with voices tender, To warn us quickly back.

We vain would eat the fruit that is forbidden, Not heeding what God saith; But by these flaming cherubim we're chidden, Lest we should pluck our death.

To save us from the pit, no screen of roses Would serve for our defence. The hindrance that completely interposes Stings back like thorny fence.

At first, when smarting from the shock, complaining Of wounds that freely bleed, God's hedges of severity us pain, May seem severe indeed.

No veil of heavenly verdure brightens, The branches fierce and bare; No sun of comfort the dark sky enlightens, Or warms the wintry air.

But afterwards, God's blessed spring-time cometh, And bitter murmurs cease; The sharp severity that bloometh, And yields the fruits of peace.

The Wreath of Life its healing leaves discovers Twined round each wounding stem, And climbing by the thorns, above them hovers Its flowery diadem.

The last Great Day, each secret deep revealing, Shall teach us what we owe To these preventing mercies, thus concealing Themselves in masks of woe;

What sunken rocks they showed on which unwitting Our souls would have been wrecked; What deadly sins they kept us from committing; What lust and pride they checked.

Then let us sing, our guarded way thus wending, Life's hidden snares among, Of mercy and judgment sweetly blending; Earth's sad but lovely song.

-Sunday Magazine.

THE FIRST PANTALOONS.

FROM THE GERMAN OF KARL HERBST.

[Concluded.]

My next pair of pants, having as usual been constructed from the cast-offs of my adult relative, were unusually well developed about the pockets and the seat. Somewhat proud of these peculiarities, I presented myself among my schoolfellows.

All at once I found myself surrounded, turned about, my projecting pockets poked and pulled, and shouts of laughter greeting me. I fought with fists, legs and teeth, and wept from rage, until the approach of the teacher stopped the sport. As tattling or informing was contrary to the "honor" of the school, the teacher knew nothing of the affair, although I could not learn my lesson for the tumult within me, and was punished in consequence.

I restrained myself until I was at home, and then I burst into bitter weeping. My mother comforted me, but could not remedy the evil. When I declared that I would not wear the things, then my father stepped in and said that nothing must be granted to such insubordination. I was very miserable.

A bright spring sun at last tempted me out into the air. Soon Cobs found me, and we made peace with each other. He then began to suggest a remedy for the evil which he had made so sore to me. He told me how he had once done with a pair of unpleasant pantaloons he wore. He went to the blacksmith's, where there was a grind-stone, and stood up against it, while little Louisa turned it, and soon a great hole was made, beautifully slit, just as sitting down on the bench at school might have done it. Cobs offered to do me a like service; but not even his assurance that the grinding felt very nice, could persuade me to it. So we sought other occupation.

There was a large iron gate to the house where Louisa lived. It was not of much use, for it always stood open, but we generally climbed over it. On the top were iron spikes like arrows, and on this occasion we had successfully reached these, and turned round comfortably, and got our legs over the spikes upon the other side. It only needed a bold jump to finish it. Cobs made the spring and was down—but alas! the wide-spreading pocket in my pantaloons caught on one of the spikes, and my jump became a fall.

I lay for a minute on my face, and when I recovered myself, I found my limbs indeed whole, but my pantaloons ruined. If I had broken a leg or something, I might have looked for pity, but now I must only expect punishment. It was a criminal case, which would come under my father's jurisdiction.

Cobs had run away. I leaned against the

wall and thought what I should do. Running away was easy, if it were not for coming back. Cobs once ran off to escape punishment at school, but he got a worse one for doing so.

Lying about it was possible; but my father's spectacled eyes seemed to pierce through all the mists and darkness of lies. Ah, the only sensible and right thing, which was to go and say to my father, "Pecavi"—did not occur to me; for it is far even from the childish heart of mankind to do this.

Then I thought I would put a bold face on it, and have it out; but I could not get myself quite up to this point. At last, when I could not see my way out of the trouble, I was seized with pity for myself, and burst into tears. I was standing there with my head resting on the wall, very melancholy, when a little hand was laid upon my shoulder, and a voice whispered: "Come, I'll get a needle and thread, and mend your pantaloons."

It was Louisa, my sister's friend. I went on crying because I did not know what else to do; but a ray of hope dawned upon me. Till now, I had always despised girls, because they did not like what we liked, or learn what we learned, or do what we did. Now I was convinced, as often again in after-life, that women are angels of mercy. Also a thought of the usefulness of hitherto despised sewing-schools came into my head.

With ready hand, though large stitches, the rents were soon mended. I stole quietly in at twilight among my brothers and sisters. We all studied our lessons at a round table under the eye of our mother, who sat spinning. Glad to sit down, I applied myself diligently to my lessons. My mother was pleased with my unusual stillness, and all was well, when my sister, who sat near me, gazing absently before her in puzzling over a question in arithmetic, accidentally spied the seam in my back. She called attention to it, and my mother told me to let her see it. My declaration that it was nothing, was of no use. I must obey. An investigation brought out the whole truth, and I had to tell even the name of the little seamstress.

I say nothing of my brothers' ridicule, for it was of no importance compared to other things. For, although my mother was not quick to think evil, she was so disturbed by the ruin of the pantaloons which she had thought indestructible, that she almost believed I had done it on purpose.

My father was called. Under this false accusation, I wept bitterly, and thought I now knew something of "torn hearts" too. The sentence was given. I went in vain to escape the unjust punishment, and after it was inflicted, I had to go to bed supperless.

When I undressed, my pantaloons sewed fast to my under-garments reminded me of the one heart which had pitted me. I could not say my prayers. I cried myself to sleep, but before my brothers and sisters came, I was awakened by a light in the room, and saw my dear mother bending over me to kiss me. Weeping, I hid my face under the clothes, but they were different tears which I shed now. With folded hands I went to sleep again, and my good angel now watched by my bed.

The following morning my troubles were forgotten like a bad dream. I could kiss my father and mother as usual; and if my brothers or sisters teased me, I could hide my head in my mother's lap. My father jokingly threatened to have my legs painted blue, and let me go without pantaloons; but I did not fear. Indeed, the oddity of the threat set my fancy to work, until I thought I should like to try it.

Another plan, however was adopted. My unfortunate pantaloons were sent for repairs, not to the tailor, but to the shoemaker! and he put a large heart-shaped patch of leather on the damaged part. The pantaloons were now ready for any amount of climbing. When the knees wore thin, I was so well pleased with the leather arrangement, that I wanted the same, on them; and by this time it had grown so popular in the town that the shoemaker had really more trousers to mend than the tailor. Then we came to have our pantaloons lengthened with leather, when they were too short; for we all seemed inclined to shoot up tall and thin. The only objection to the leather business was the weight in summer.

I entered my ninth year, just as the beauty of June lay upon field and forest. "Cobs" was still my friend, in spite of occasional conflicts between us. One day we wandered off into the woods. How many eyes, ears and hands were needful to grasp the whole splendor and loveliness of the forest around us! A man's heart would have been refreshed, but the child's heart was intoxicated with it all. A little brook ran along under the trees, now leaping joyfully, then silently losing itself, as if in quiet thoughts. We stood by it, and threw leaves and bits of wood into it, watching them until they disappeared—then Cobs took off his shoes and paddled with bare feet in the water. Louisa followed his example. Next Cobs pulled off his pantaloons, in order to wade. I did the same. This was charming. It was so nice to see all the images in the water shake as we walked, and to fancy that we stood on the tops of the trees as we saw them in the brook.

All at once voices were heard on the bank where we left our things. With suspended breath we listened, and recognized the voice of a neighbor. It was fortunate that our clothes-depot separated passers-by from the brook; but they could scarcely fail to attract attention. "Why, there are boy's clothes!" exclaimed the neighbor; and his little Louisa cried out: "Those pantaloons are—" and then she stopped as if she had bitten her tongue. Her mother, however, said the name which she was about to utter; for my grey pantaloons were well-known in the neighborhood. I wanted to sink into the earth, or rather into the water. I hid behind an overhanging bush. "If they should come towards the place where we were!" dreadful thought!

Any kind of pantaloons would have been welcome then. I begged pardon in secret, of all the trousers which I had ever injured, and vowed hatred to all sans culottes. I felt the truth of the saying, that one must be obliged to do without a thing, before he can know its value.

But Cobs, from his hiding-place, uttered a sound like some wild beast's cry, and the intruders had the good sense to retire by the way that they came. They told the story at home,

and my brothers tormented me about the wild men in the wood. But the person who first recognized the pantaloons never said a word.

And perhaps I should never have told the story, if my pantaloons had not been one of a thousand indifferent things which exercised an important influence on the future of the youthful citizen of the world.

THE LOCUSTS.

The husbandman has met with a host of enemies. See what they have done. The trees were yesterday fair and flourishing. Their leaves rustled in the breeze, or shone in the sun. His field of maize or corn was coming into ear. He was happy and prosperous. But all at once this army of foes came upon him. He is trying to frighten them away. He shouts, and screams, and runs furiously upon them.

But you see they will be too many for him. The whole air is full of them. Part of the sky is darkened by a dense, black cloud.

In the distance the sun is shining. What are his enemies? They are the locusts.

They have not left a single green leaf upon his trees. The bare stems stand as if blasted by lightning.

Now they are trying to eat up his corn. The very name of locust gives us the idea of something which devours and destroys. And from the very earliest days of the world's history, we hear of the desolation made by the locusts. They are part of God's great army which is sent now and then to punish the earth.

Shall I tell you how they come? At first in a silent and, as it seems, harmless manner.

A number of insects fly along near the sea-coast.

They are the shape of the grasshopper, only larger, and they do not wear its delicate green robe. They have brown spotted wings, and yellow bodies. Still, if we called them large grasshoppers, we should not be far wrong. They belong to the same family. What are they coming for? To lay their eggs.

They quickly lay million on million of eggs. Man cannot help it any more than he could stay the movement of the world.

All over the fields, and meadows, and orchards,—everywhere, in fact,—are countless swarms of eggs left hidden. This is what the locusts came for!

Then, like a mountain mist, the locusts pass away, and are no more seen. Time goes on his round. The beautiful spring weather and the warm sun calls nature into life.

The meadows are covered with soft, green grass, the buds put forth, and the vines are full of tender leaves.

The singing of birds is heard in the land. Now mark what happens.

The warm sun hatches the myriad of eggs. Out comes a countless horde of locusts.

They are not perfect insects. They have several changes to go through, and they have not yet their wings.

But they are ravenously hungry. They begin to eat.

Then a mighty army rushes all at once upon the smiling landscape,—an army so vast that nothing in nature can compare with it. It seems to rise out of the earth as by magic.

The surface of the ground teems with locusts. Column presses upon column. They march in battle array. Nothing can stand before them. Their appetite is insatiable. Every green blade is devoured. The fair fields of yesterday are like a desert!

When anything comes in their way they march over it. They climb walls and houses. They enter the rooms, even the very bed-chambers.

The people are all aroused. This is what they have been dreading.

The cry goes forth, "The locusts! the locusts!"

In the language of the Bible, "The land is pained because of them." People do all they can to stop the progress of the army. They dig trenches, and fill them with water, and they light fires in the path of the locusts. But their efforts are in vain.

The trenches soon get filled with locusts. Column after column keeps on marching over the dead bodies of their comrades. Nothing can stay or hinder them. For one dead locust there are millions of living ones.

The very bark and branches of the trees are gnawed off. The country that was like the garden of Eden becomes a wilderness.

After a few days the voracious appetite of the locust is stayed; a change is coming over it. It has to assume its wings, and become capable of flight.

Its wings have not yet been visible, but they lie rolled up in the least possible space on its sides.

Presently the old skin breaks, and the perfect insect comes forth. Then it can rise into the air, and fly where it likes.

And now begins another scene in the life of the locust. The mighty army ceases to run and jump on the ground. It forms a dense cloud that darkens the very sun!

The cloud will move along, passing over land and sea. Sometimes the anxious husbandman sees it coming, and wrings his hands in despair. But the cloud does not interfere with him. It passes on. The time is not come for the locusts to settle. "We be to the land where they do settle!"

People have heard the sound as of a rushing mighty wind. On comes the dense cloud in the distance, spreading half over the sky. Then down it drops.

The locusts have come to the ground to feed.

They will not stop till they have quite eaten up every green thing.

Happily, in those countries Nature very soon repairs the evil, and puts forth new buds and new shoots; or else the mischief would be very sad indeed.

In many places the poor natives have a kind of revenge.

If the locusts eat up the produce of their fields, they in their turn eat the locusts.

The wandering Arab makes the locust a staple article of food. In the shops at Medina locusts are sold by measure. The shops are called locust shops.

Sacks of dried locusts are often found in the Arab's tent. He mixes them with butter, and spreads them on his bread for breakfast!

John the Baptist, we are told, fed on locusts and wild honey.

In the South of Africa the coming of the swarm of locusts is not so much dreaded, on account of the supply of food they bring.

The natives make them into a kind of paste, and live upon them for a long time. —The Children's Paper.

WOMAN'S INFLUENCE.

At a recent press dinner in New York, at which ladies and gentlemen were present, a number of after-dinner speeches were made by both. Phoebe Cary was present, but declined to speak, furnishing her part of the entertainment in the following graceful poem, which was read for her:

APOLOGY.

How can you ask of us a speech, When all creation teaches, That Woman's chiefest end is just To listen to Man's speeches?

True, there was a Friscilla once, Who spoke her mind,—oh, horror! But 'twas because the bashful John Was slow in speaking for her.

Why, asking for a Woman's hand Has so confused her senses, She answered Yes, instead of No, And took the consequences.

But Woman,—and I love my sex,— Says many a word that reaches Farther than all the sparkling wit Of after-dinner speeches.

Where'er Man's words of eloquence Inspire and rouse a nation, There breathes through them the undertone Of Woman's inspiration.

And whether hers are lofty words That nerve to fiery trial, Or only meek and lowly deeds Of love and self-denial;

In tones so clear and true and sweet, They ring the wide world over, She speaks from out her heart to ours, And men and angels love her.

NEGRO UTTERANCES.

Experience among the freedmen has brought to light many traits of character attractively simple, honest and odd. Their quaint way of "putting things" is not the least of their out-workings that interest, and in them will be found something more than amusement.

The following comes as the narration of Miss Ann S. Dudley, teacher among the freedmen at Charleston. One convert says: "I have got safe by the back corner, and I will go all de journey home; and if you don't see me at de first of dem twelve gates, look to de next one for I shall be dere!"

Another: "When I left de rebel ranks and crossed over to de Lord's army, I tore up de bridge behind me. Now I'm fightin' with de captain dat's never lost a battle!"

Who will dispute the genuineness of the following conversion? "I hasn't got quality 'ligion. I don't want de 'ligion of quality people!—I've got de 'ligion of Jesus—I loves everybody!"

It is worth the roughness and toil of a teacher's experience to have poured out for one such a prayer as this: "O Lord, bless de teacher who come so far to struct us in de way to heaven. Rook her in de oradle of love! Backen de word of power in her heart, dat she may have souls for her hire, and many stars in her crown in de great gittin up mornin' when de general roll is called. And when all de battles is over may she fall kivered with victory, be buried with de honors of war, and rise to wear de long white robe in glory, and walk de shinin' street in silver slippers, down by de golden sunrise, close to de great white throne; and dere may she strike glad hands wid all her dear scholars, and praise you, O Lord, forever and ever, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

MINISTERIAL CONSECRATION.

During the examination of preachers for admission into the East Baltimore Conference, at its recent session, Bishop Thomson in his charge to them, said:

"Piety is the first qualification—the sine qua non of a Christian minister. Charity! O what a necessity is that! Without the love of God how can we be successful in winning souls to Christ? Press forward, brethren, to higher attainments. Through Christ you can do all things. We are taught to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. You need to consecrate all your powers to this great work. Remember you promise to give yourself wholly to this work and ministry. It is not by scattering the rays, but by converging them, that we become burning and shining lights. Be diligent. The diligent man often outstrips the so-called genius. Be punctual. Meet all your engagements exactly at the time. God's eternal Word never changes. The rules of the Church, founded upon His Word, should be kept—not mended. Bear in mind this promise—keep these rules. Visit from house to house, and gather up your propositions for your public exercises. It is said when the ancients came to lay out St. James his knees were as hard and callous as those of a camel. He had literally traveled to heaven on his knees. Brethren, get your knees harder; and all things else will come easier. Don't fret at your

appointment; you ought to be more thankful for a poor appointment than a good one. When you have a good appointment you are at the top of the hill, and if you move you must go down. Don't be afraid of moving; ministers of other denominations move also. We move in circles easily and according to law; others move irregularly, sometimes at sharp angles and with difficulty."

THE EFFECTUAL TEACHER.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, was the Great Teacher. Both in the words which He spoke, and in the manner in which He spoke them, He stands alone among those born of woman, who have assumed to teach truth and duty to men. Even His enemies were constrained to confess: "Never man spake like this man."

But that is altogether an inadequate view that regards Him simply in the light of a teacher of truth; even a perfect, infallible teacher. The mere knowledge of truth might suffice to make us holy, if the sins of man were, as some maintain, the mere result, and not largely the cause, of our ignorance of Divine truth. But, alas! in this actual human world it is found that men may know their duty and do it not; may know the truth only to hold it in unrighteousness; may love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. What serious self-observant man does not feel that he needs something more and deeper than intellectual apprehensions of truth, something more effective than a teacher of mere positive principles? He needs a mighty impulse within. He needs an inward drawing from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven. He needs a sacred influence welling up in his soul, that shall work penitence for sin and a love for the calm and pure delights of communion with God, and loving obedience to His will.

Now the Lord Jesus was a prophet that supplies this deep, this crying want of human nature. Along with His words, there went a mysterious but blessed power to work spiritual results. He finds one sitting at the receipt of custom, absorbed, apparently at least, with the duties and interests of his public office. Follow me, says Christ, and behold he rises up at once, leaves all and follows, as though unable to resist the constraining force of that Divine call. In a quiet home in Bethany, He sits down to speak of the Divine Kingdom, that kingdom, spiritual and holy, that cometh not with observation; and lo! Mary forgets all her wonted earthly cares, and hears for her soul's life. Upon one Jewish dignitary, in all his prejudices of religion and pride of caste, His works and word fell with such resistless power, that he was constrained to seek Him out, albeit under cover of the night, and learn from him the mysteries of His new kingdom of grace and truth. His voice came over the heart of one sinful woman with such energy, as to reclaim her from a life of deepest shame to a life of saintly virtue, in which her love to all that was good and pure, and true, was only equalled by the depth of her gratitude to that Great Restorer, whose feet she washed with her tears, and wiped with the hairs of her head.

One man was rich. It is probable he had grown rich by extortion. Obduracy had kept pace with the increase of wealth. He belonged to a despised class. The degenerate priesthood shunned him as a sinner. The Scribes sneered at him, and the still more hypocritical Pharisees caught up their long robes, lest they should touch him on their way to the synagogue. But what cared he for all this? He was rich, and thus independent of them. Let these proud hypocrites sneer or scowl, or curse; with greater pride, and more contemptuous malignity, a sort of compound interest of scorn, he can hurl back their compliments.

What or who shall reach a case like this? Christ enters that man's house, and sits down at his table. Into his darkened mind, darkened by ignorance, pride, avarice and hatred, He pours the truth; and with His words there is breathed a sacred power, that at once transforms Zaccheus into another man: a transformation thus expressed by the grateful penitent—"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore four-fold." Oh! was not Christ much more than a mere Teacher? was He not the Divine Restorer, the Healer?

And there is in all this application to us. Where the ministry of Christ is faithfully proclaiming His name, there is not only the proclamation of the same blessed truth, which flowed from the Master's lips on earth; but that truth falling upon human hearts in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The hardened are subdued at His feet. The wandering are reclaimed. The slaves of passion and prejudice are emancipated, and made humble, spiritual, lovely and loving. The impure are made holy, and man, fallen and degraded is raised out of the pit, and his foot placed upon the rock.

Shall we not then all come to this Great Teacher—this Divine Restorer? Shall we not find our life, our rest, our deliverance in Him? Blessed are they who, are by Him taught, not in word only, but in power, in Spirit. —Prot. Churchman.

"Unless it please God to send us some one from Him, to instruct us," said Socrates to his pupil Alcibiades, "do not hope ever to succeed in reforming the morals of men. The best course we can take is to wait patiently."