

Family Reading.

A Little Philosopher.

BY MRS. MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

The days are short and the nights are long, And the wind is nipping cold;

But Johnny McCree, Oh, what cares he, As he whistles along the way?

The plums are few and the cake is plain, The shoes are out at the toe;

But Johnny McCree, Oh, what cares he, As he whistles along the street?

The snow is deep there are paths to break, But the little arm is strong,

But at Johnny's kiss she is bright and glad— She loves him, and wouldn't you?

The mother's face it is often sad, She scarce knows what to do;

But at Johnny's kiss she is bright and glad— She loves him, and wouldn't you?

NOTICE.

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Apple-Blossom.

CHAPTER III.

One day, the old doctor stopped at the school-gate, and calling for me, told me with the bluntness which distinguished him, but which was never greater than when he wished to dissemble any emotion; for under his rough outside he had a tender heart:

"Miss Mary, you must go to Margaret and tell her that it is all over, as well as tell her mother; they will bear it better on hearing it from your mouth than from any other."

The doctor, as good as he was blunt, could add no more through his emotion. He had just discharged a painful duty. He went away as suddenly as he had come, without even telling me what I had to communicate to them. But this was not necessary. I knew it but too well, and I returned tottering to the school, and shuddering at the thought of the task I had before me.

Must I really tell Margaret that in the morning of her youth she had no longer before her but a sad and perhaps long existence of infirmity? Was it possible that she could never again rise from the blow which had struck her in full health, in full strength? What! Shall I never again see her descend the hill, bounding as she so often did! Shall I never see her again seized with a fit of girlish gaiety which some of us experience in the spring-time of life, when, like the plants in the spring-time of nature, one feels within the sap that ascends, boils, and overflows. She danced about her class, when the signal for recreation was scarcely given, drawing around her

in turn each of her companions! Must I tell her that all her expectations are lost, all her plans overturned, and that in place of being able to support her mother, she must herself be supported.

Yes, it must be so. Margaret must know the truth about herself. It was under this terrible reality that she must hereafter regulate her life. It was an act of kindness to tell her, everything. But how painful this duty was to discharge! O God, why hast Thou so willed it? I continued to give my lessons, but as in a dream. I was conscious of nothing, except of the double duty which awaited me when these lessons were finished. I only heard the cry of anguish in my heart: "Lord, Jesus, help me! Lord Jesus, sustain Margaret!" However as my tears were falling, I felt an unusual peace take possession of my mind, and I felt that he who had known mercifully the miseries of this world to relieve them, and on whom had been taken the sufferings of humanity, had lightened the burden of my heart and had taken it on his own; so all along the road, on going to the little cottage, this touching hymn resounded within me:

How pleasant 'tis to say, The Lord doth think of me; He knows my every sigh, Wheu in adversity;

He sees my earnest tears, And will me only prove; Nor are there any fears, He may not soon remove."

I addressed myself first to the mother, but I cannot say in what language I expressed my sad and painful message—it was much more painful than I had imagined. To tell the truth, I had not much thought about the poor mother, so much had my attention been drawn towards Margaret. But this at last was done, and I let the poor rendered heart shed its grief before our Heavenly Father, knowing that it would receive greater consolations than any I could give it.

Then I betook myself to the chamber of my dear one. The pale countenance, so cast down, lights up on seeing me—I was always received with a smile so affectionate and so sweet; but now something on my countenance struck her, and, quite astonished, she exclaimed:

"You have some bad news to tell me. What is it? Tell me!"

I took her into my arms—for since her accident I had often held her thus some hours during her long sleepless nights—and I told her all. I shall always hear the echo of the groan that she uttered. She did not utter a word; she did not shed a tear; but her whole body trembled as if every nerve had been a separate being, and each one had been twisted in the convulsions of individual agony. I could not but press her still more towards me, apply my lips to her forehead, which gave forth cold perspiration, and caress the head so dear, upon which my tears were falling.

At length, perhaps it was some minutes after—perhaps some hours—there was a profound silence, and then blessed tears came forth. Oh! how I thanked God for those tears! And then she told me in a torrent of hasty and burning words the story of their poverty, of their isolation, their small reserve of diminished money, and the absolute necessity of her gaining a living for herself and her mother. Here the poor girl's voice quite failed, but she overcame her emotion, and continued:

"Have you not observed that mamma has always some fine embroidery in her hand? It is by this means that she procures a little money, and that she provides for our wants. From morning till night she is at work with the needle. She weakens her sight, she exhausts her strength, and now I shall never be able to be of any service to her. Oh, I wish I could die!"

Do not find fault, dear reader, with my Apple-blossom. Do not tell me about resignation. It was not yet the time for resignation.

"God has forgotten me!" This cry of despair escaped from her lips. But the supreme bitterness of this thought was a torment above her strength, and when she said to me: "Leave me, I pray you," I understood why it was. She perceived, and I also, that this was one of those solemn moments, one of

those mysterious conflicts, in which faith triumphs or succumbs; and so I left her alone with her trial and with her God.

CHAPTER IV.

I dared not return to her very soon, but after more than an hour had passed, I went back to her room. Her mother was coming out of it, and put her finger on her mouth, pointing to Margaret by her looks. I was astonished to find her asleep. I sat down softly at her side, and looked at her. There were still some tears on her cheeks, but they did not seem to have fallen with bitterness; the deep furrows which suffering had dug on her forehead appeared less marked; in fine, the more I looked on her, the more I perceived the general expression of her face to be at ease, and I even caught a smile of celestial sweetness which lightly came over, and even extended her lips, so much contracted some moments before.

She slept some time longer, and then suddenly opening her eyes, she asked me,

"Did you speak to me?"

"No, my dear."

"Then God has spoken to me!"

And such an expression of joy and devotedness was spread over her countenance, that profound religious respect took possession of me; I did not ask her what she meant; I wished to wait until she explained herself, and this she soon did.

She remained silent and perfectly quiet for some moments, a sweet smile passing all the while over her lips; then looking at me mildly, and revealing to me the depth of her soul, she said:

"I thought that God had forgotten me, but I was mistaken. He thinks about me."

"I know it, my dear," said I; "but how have you found it out?"

He has told me so himself. He has spoken to my soul. When you left me I was in open revolt against Him. Oh, what a conflict! I could not accept His will, I did not wish to submit to it; I strove, strove until, bruised and exhausted I felt myself overcome. It must have been then that I went to sleep. I do not know how long I have slept. I do know if I was still sleeping, or if I was quite a wake, when I heard a voice that I took to be yours, and which said to me, as distinctly as I repeat it to you now: 'The Eternal never leaves, never forsakes his beloved ones.' You say that you have not spoken to me; then it must have been God himself. Awake or asleep, no matter; it was He who made me hear those sweet words; it was He who recalled to me that 'consoling promise. Then He is near me! He reckons me among the number of his beloved ones; He will not forsake me; He has given His Son for me; He will give me all things with Him. He has told me so. Oh, now I can endure everything!"

And she threw herself into my arms, and we remained thus a long time, weeping and praying together. The dear and brilliant qualities, the relative purity of my dear Apple-blossom might have partially deceived her as to her state of sin while in health and cheerfulness, but her sufferings made her contemplate the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the only pure and only holy One, revealed to her at the same time her sin and the cure of her sin. Our beloved and dear sick one, in this painful isolation, addressed by prayer her dearly beloved Saviour, who became her companion in suffering, her consolation, and her intimate friend.

I had vexed my mind, asking myself with indescribable concern how I could shed a little balm on the wounded heart of Margaret; but God had no need of me, a poor and feeble intercessor. He wished with his own sovereign hand to bind up the wound He himself had made, and so gently that she even blessed Him for the wound itself, on account of the hand that dressed it.

During the months and years that followed, for she lived several years in an invalid state. He continued his work in his child, teaching her in the school of suffering to exercise a blessed ministry amongst the flock of the desolate.

Where could one find a heart more tender, more loving than that of Margaret, or a sympathy more lively and

delicate? So, near and far off, those who suffered from anything, whatever it was, came to her and never went away without having felt her sweet influence, and without taking away from her room some precious consolation.

But her Heavenly Father, who is great in counsel and abundant in means, desired also that this trial, which had enriched her spiritually, might serve to realize the dearest desire of her heart. It is thus often that conducting us by ways that are far from being our own, our Heavenly Father brings us to know by our own experience, those words formerly addressed to his people: "I know that the thoughts I have concerning you, says the Eternal, are thought of peace and not of trouble, in order to give you the end that you desire."

There was in her an artistic genius, but which, in the exuberance of her physical vigour, and in the midst of her many duties faithfully and earnestly fulfilled at home and at school, had never been able to shine forth; but now during constrained leisure, in the calm uniformity of her invalid existence, these creative faculties were revealed. She walked no longer, but her imagination extended its wings, and made her taste of joys till then unknown and compensating by their vivacity and charm for many others.

She desired to work at the needle like her mother, because no other means of aiding remained in her power. In her hands the canvas became a magic mirror in which were reflected all her poetical ideas. She perceived and gave back what she could no longer in reality enjoy. The bright flowers of the tropics, which she was never to behold; the most familiar plants of our gardens; the sweet perfumes which she could only breathe when rolled over upon her arm-chair before her humble abode; the velvet mosses, the elegant ferns of our woods, the pleasing grasses of our meadows, which her feet were never again to tread on, grew under her nimble fingers, harmonized, intertwined, and grouped in a charming manner.

Thus was attained the end that she always had in view, and which had been the strongest stimulant of her studies, the greatest aspiration of her youth. She gained her livelihood and her mother's. She could restore to this dearly-beloved mother a little of the lost ease and comfort of the time of her father. And I, who had been the teacher of my Apple-blossom, became her pupil; happy in seating myself humbly at her feet, and learning from her a lesson of submission, of patience, and of faith, which she received from God himself, and which she so faithfully transmits to others by her touching example. To you, also my dear readers, may this lesson be taught by this imperfect record of my sweet Apple-blossom.

The way to get Married.*

In those good old times which, in spite of their goodness, we are glad that we never knew by experience—when the population of the country remained stationary generation after generation, people were accustomed to wait until they were middle-aged before they thought of taking a wife. They had little idea of hurrying over anything, much less over so important a business as that of courting, marrying, and setting up a home. They excelled in that quality which, for want of a better name, we call prudence, and accordingly, they seldom assumed responsibilities before they were able to bear them with ease. It is at once our privilege and our pain to live in a faster age, when youths and maidens, as well as their elders, try to keep pace with the telegraph and the steam-engine, very often to their own discomfiture. They too often build upon the sand, and find that fragile fabric will topple over when exposed to unlooked for storms. In a word, marriage frequently brings disappointment instead of happiness, and does so because at a critical juncture a mistake was committed and a false step taken which no years of repentance can rectify. Some of our English proverbs are ingeniously

*A Golden Guide to Matrimony; or, Three Steps to the Altar, etc. Illustrated by seven Engravings. By Job Flower. Published by the Author. City, Melksham, Wiltshire. Price 2s. 9d. post free.

worded lies, but "marry in haste and repent at leisure," is, at least, fraught with saddest truth, affecting a large class.

It may be that, in the past, swains and maidens have walked into Cupid's snares, instead of into connubial bliss, for want of a competent guide; but that excuse will no longer avail; for Job Flower, whose very patronymic is suggestive of patience and beauty, volunteers assistance which none can refuse except at their peril. "Ye who desire a wedded life, who seek a husband or a wife; within this book a guide you'll find, to gain the object of your mind." If you ask, "What could have induced the author to undertake the task?" his answer is, that "In the course of a lengthened experience and close observation of human nature, in this and other lands, he has seen so much confusion in matrimonial affairs, so many unhappy marriages, and so vast an amount of misery resulting therefrom, that he has felt it to be a conscientious duty to raise a warning voice." We welcome Mr. Flower's well-meant endeavour to substitute harmony for domestic discord; and although his sentiment is better than his style, we do not suppose that purchasers of the volume will ever look regretfully after their two and ninepence. The author has collected his materials with considerable industry; he has also received valuable assistance from a friend; and the many choice extracts from approved authors scattered through the work, alone contain a mass of good advice which must benefit both the married and the single. We compliment Mr. Job Flower on the issue of his singular production, and hope it will be true that

"Each bridegroom and each lovely bride Rejoice to read thy marriage guide."

Having opened with an appropriate preface, which severe critics alone will discover to have been written by a countryman, our author discourses on the flower of friendship "the foundation of true love . . . the rock upon which the building must be reared." Some of the remarks he makes on this subject are so appropriate, and the blossoms culled from the garden of ancient and modern literature are so chastely elegant, that we regret our inability to make extended quotations. Young persons are warned against contracting hasty friendships; while girls are especially cautioned to "steer clear" of those "who are fond of the public-house and the glass, who are slaves to the pipe or cigar, also those who gamble or bet, and those who frequent the theatre or the racetrack." The formation of improper friendships is undoubtedly one of the chief stumbling blocks of youth; and as a chief safeguard Mr. Flower recommends his audience to "cultivate the friendship with the Most High. Hold communion with the Saviour. Open wide your heart to the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit."

We come next to courting, which is defined as "a preliminary interchange of sentiments, by which young people are enabled to obtain a good understanding of each other, to learn each other's dispositions to see whether they can sail down the stream of life harmoniously together." Human beings manifestly require much careful sorting before happy marriages can be assured; some being sufficiently "all square" to become readily fitted with suitable mates, while the angularities of others render them very difficult to match with anybody. What the dictionaries call "the quality of being angular," if it be a quality at all, is a very undesirable characteristic; and any girl or youth who does not show less of angularity at the close of courtship than at the opening does not deserve to be married at all. As nature's misfits they would confer considerable benefit on society by living alone, and allowing their special species to die out. Mr. Flower's advice on the subject "Never spend powder and shot upon a bird or hare that will not pay for cooking. . . Parental advice is a good thing, and no engagement should be entered upon in opposition to a parent's consent. Above all, a Heavenly Father's direction and guidance should be sought." According to this sage of Melksham the "six qualifications necessary for an honest matrimony," are "equality of age; adequate

income; chastity; health; love; and religion."

How shall an unsophisticated girl discover whether she is really fairly sought by the one who woos her? Mr. Flower replies: "If you would know whether a young man who offers you his attentions really loves you, and with a virtuous regard, you must note whether he always treats you with the nicest degree of modesty and respect; whether he consults your feelings; whether he is willing to make sacrifices for your sake; whether he is ever ready to defend you against the unjust attacks of others; whether he is careful not to pay to others those attentions which belong only to you; whether he sympathises with you in your troubles, and rejoices heartily with you in your pleasures; whether he is anxious to gain your esteem; if you note all this in him you may be certain of his love." Of course something follows about being "not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Without sympathy in this direction there is sure to be contention and strife.—Sword & Trowel.

Bouths' Department.

Original and Selected.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 220.

A Bible Scene.

Here is a most unusual occurrence, that took place in ancient times, three kingly personages come in a humble attitude before, an apparently poor man. One of them speaks in imploring tones whilst the poor man replies in reproachful language. At length he asks for his minstrel and plays upon it till he becomes absorbed, so that he appears oblivious to his surroundings. He speaks and gives directions to the three kings who listen with eager attention, and then hasten away to obey the directions given. Who were the kings? Who was the man having the minstrel? What was their request? And what were they to do?

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 46.

A word of five letters:

They form that which we every day Do need and use for food, There's not a day but it is made, And reckoned every good. Take letter first away, To you it is not new— What every teacher in the schools Makes all his scholars do. If you now transpose me, I then mean value high; The other meanings I have got You'll very soon descry. Repeat the process as before— That is, if you're inclined— You'll see it means defiance. When you the answer find, Transpose again, decapitate, Then it will bring to view A color that is very gay, Though neither white nor blue. If you make whole, and then transpose, You very soon will trace What grown people often have Adhering to their face. Pray do again curtail, An animal 'twill be, Which I am very sure You've no desire to see. Another transposition, Likewise again curtail, To you then it will name A sandbank without fail.

No. 47.

Form a word square of the following described words:

- 1. Vegetable substances, green and beautiful, yet "have their time to fall." 2. An animal valued for its fur, white, sleek, and small. 3. Compensation made for any wrong design. 4. A flavor, taste or quality of wine. 5. To suffer or to bear whatever fills we meet. 6. Taxes, though the word is nearly obsolete.

No. 48.

Word Changes.

Change foot to mile, with five intervening words—one letter at a time. Change lose to find, by four intervening words. Change book to read, by three intervening words.

Find answers to the above—write them down—and see how they agree with the answers to be given next week.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 219.

- 1. P rison. Acts xvi. 23-35. 2. A thens. Acts xvii. 16, 23. 3. U proar. Acts xix. 23-41. 4. L uke. 2 Tim. iv. 11.

PAUL.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 43.

- (1) Sodom. (2) Lot. (3) Solomon. (4) No. (5) Wood. (6) Room. (7) Door. (8) Flood. (9) Og. (10) Job. (11) Good. (12) Moon.

No. 44.

Snail, nail, all, il, i.

No. 45.

Drop Letter.

To thine own self be true, and keep Thy mind from sloth, thy heart from soil, Press on, and thou shalt surely reap A heavenly harvest for thy toil.