Family Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Village Bell.

BY FREDERICK M. STEADMAN.

It hangs in the tower of the little church
On the hill by the winding stream;
And its spire we see
O'er the maple tree,
In the mill-fire's changing gleam.

The sexton's thoughts as he pulls the rope
To his youth have passed away;
And he sails once more
The seas of yore,
And feels the ocean's spray.

And the bell seems music to his ears,
Like the sound of the rolling main;
And he heaves a sigh—
For those days gone bye
Can never come back again.

The bell too, has a far off sound,
As though for the past it sighed;
When at its call
The people all
Flocked in from far and wide.

For then it rang in joyous peals;
But since has often tolled!
For men of worth
Who here on earth
We'll ne'er again behold.

And now in low and measured tones,
It calls to evening prayer,
Believers true
A chosen few,
Unto the house repair.

The bell has stopped; but yet we see
O'er the trees the spire still,
All clothed in light
Like a spectre white
While gleams the fire at the mill.

Mill Village, May, 1884.

New Select Serial.

A DEACON'S DAUGHTER.

BY MISS LILIAN F. WELLS.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. HALIDAY AND JESSIE CARE FOR MARTHA.

Martha applied for the position and obtained it. Another scene of her life was ended. It had opened with much glad promise for the future; but its close had proved those promises only a delusion. Now she was to enter upon a new scene—common-place and unpromising enough it seemed. How would it end?

She secured a boarding-place only a few blocks from the school. A fourth-story back-room, rather scantily furnished, was all her means would permit now. She told herself that she did not care. She had no friends to call upon her; and for herself it made no great difference, after all, whether her room were elegant or not.

She had had no experience of teaching in school; but she bent all her powers to the work of making amends for that lack, and it soon came to pass that those who visited her department gave very gratifying reports of what was done there.

Sundays were as busy days with her as any others; for she read and wrote industriously all day. She had ventured to send a short article to a popular magazine soon after the beginning of her school work. It had been promptly accepted; and now she was a regular contributor to that and several other magazines and papers.

But one bright, clear Lord's Day in February she was seized with a sudden indisposition for reading or writing, and a longing to be out in the keen, frosty air. Donning hat and cloak, she went out, and for some time walked briskly along, street after street, not caring, scarcely knowing, what direction she took. By-and-by, she slackened her pace before a large church.

There were crowds of people going up the broad steps and through the open doors. What if she were to go in too? It was a long time since she had been inside a church. Hark! there was the organ, and she would like to hear some music. Yes, she would go in for curiosity's sake, and for the mere novelty of the thing.

She passed up the steps and through the dim vestibule with the rest; but stopped just within the door of the great auditorium, and waited to be shown to a seat. Presently she felt a gentle touch upon her arm. Turning, she saw two ladies standing beside her, the one middle aged, though looking somewhat older, and the other about twenty five or six. They were evidently mother and daughter.

'Pardon me,' said the elder lady; 'but if you wish a seat, we should be glad to have you sit with us.'

Martha gladly accepted the offer, and followed the two down the aisle, scarcely knowing whether to be provoked with herself for coming, or to yield herself to the solemn influence of the holy place and the beautiful music.

I cannot say that the sermon did her any good. She could not have told one sentence of it when it was over, nor even what the text was. She was engaged, most of the time, in studying the faces that were within range of her eyes, especially those of the two ladies with whom she was sitting. They were attractive faces; particularly that of the younger lady. It was a pretty face, but it was also a pure, hopeful, trustworthy face, bright with a cheery sweetness that was good to see. The mother's face looked somewhat worn, either by sickness or trouble, or both; but it was calm and peaceful, nevertheless, and gave promise of strength to bear and to do.

They parted at the close of the service, with a friendly 'Good-morning.' Martha went back to her boarding-house feeling rested; but not thinking she should ever see the two again—not even consciously wishing that she might.

The next morning, on her way to school, she noticed that a corner house, whose 'shut-up' appearance she had often observed, showed signs of having new occupants. The door was open, they were carrying in furniture, and there was an air of bustling preparation about the place. Two or three mornings afterward, as Martha looked up in passing, she was pleased to see one of the front windows filled with blossoming plants. Involuntarily she stood still to look, for she had an almost passionate love of flowers—when among the green and bloom peeped out the sweet, bright face of the young lady with whom she had sat on Sunday. It was very natural that there should be a nod and smile of recognition between them, and then Martha walked on. She naturally looked for that winsome face on her way home, and realized a slight feeling of disappointment that it was not there. She caught a glimpse of it in the morning again, however, and called herself a foolish girl for being interested in it. Nevertheless, she soon grew into the habit of looking up at the flowery window whenever she passed, partially for the pleasure the lovely blossoms gave her; but more to catch a glimpse of the sweet, bright face. It was almost always smiling out at her from behind the plants; for its owner soon learned the time of day when Martha passed, and kept watch for her.

One pleasant morning, about the middle of March, when spring was sending abroad her first herald—a warm, reviving breath from the south—Martha missed the face from among the flowers; but saw, the next moment, that it was at the other window which was open.

'Good-morning!' said the young lady, in a voice as cheery as her face. 'You seem to like flowers so much, wouldn't you like these to take with you?'

'Indeed I would,' Martha answered quickly. 'I always thought a school-room needed flowers almost more than any other place.'

'Then you are a teacher?'

'Yes,'

'Do you know, I had an idea you were, though I am sure I do not know why. I watch for you every day, and I should like very much to know your name.'

'Should you? Well—it is Martha Stirling.'

'Martha Stirling—how good and true that sounds? Now mine has no such ring in it. It is only Jessie Haliday.'

'I always liked Jessie. It has a sound of the highland breezes in it. Thank you. They are very sweet,' added Martha, taking the offered bunch of roses and geraniums, and turning to go.

'Mother,' said Jessie, closing the window, and going over to where her mother sat, 'there is something exceedingly interesting to me in that girl's face. She looks tired and troubled and dissatisfied. I wish I could do something to help her.'

'May-be you can, dear—some day,' said Mrs. Haliday.

As the spring advanced, Martha was made aware that her health was failing. With a desperate determination she kept on at her work, teaching, studying, writing with unabated energy, resolved to 'fight it off.' The struggle was a severe one but disease proved the conqueror. Day by day Martha felt her strength going. At last, one warm, rainy April morning, she knew that she must yield. Still she went to school, thinking she might hold out one day longer. It was a source of wonder to her afterward, how she went through that day. Her head ached and throbbed painfully, and more than once she grew dizzy and faint, and the children's faces and voices seemed far away in a misty distance. But each time she rallied again, and went on with the lessons as well as she could, though she could not have told whether they were recited well or ill. There was a sound in her ears 'as of the voice of many waters,' and she seemed to have lost all power of thought.

The day seemed like weeks to her. But it was over at last, and, trembling with weakness, Martha started for her boarding-house. There were only three blocks to walk, but the way seemed interminable. Added to this, there was the sickening fear of falling on the crossings; she was so bewildered as scarcely to be able to tell whether there were vehicles about to pass or not. Just on the corner of the second block she stopped, feeling that she could go no farther. A great darkness seemed to shut down upon her, she swayed to and fro for a moment, and then fell.

Jessie Haliday, watching for her at the window, saw her fall, and ran out with a cry of distress that made Mrs. Haliday start up and follow.

'Oh, mother, it is Martha Stirling!' cried Jessie, lifting the unconscious girl's head from the pavement.

A crowd had gathered—among them a policeman.

'Will you please lift this young lady and bring her into the house?' Mrs. Haliday asked him.

The officer stopped, took Martha in his arms, and followed Mrs. Haliday and Jessie into the house and up-stairs, to their cosy sitting-room. Then he took his departure, and the two ladies proceeded to use such restoratives as they knew to bring Martha back to consciousness. But all proved unavailing. At last they gave up in despair; and Debby, the maid-of-all-work, was sent for the doctor. It was some time before he came, and still Martha showed no sign of life; but his skillful efforts soon proved successful. The eyelids trembled, and then slowly opened. But the dark eyes were heavy and lustreless, and there was but little of its usual intelligence in the white, worn face.

The doctor watched her for a while, then rose and left the room. Mrs. Haliday followed.

'What do you think, doctor?' she asked.

'It is difficult to tell yet,' he answered, 'It looks to me like a case of complete prostration—a giving way of all the energies, physical and mental. I cannot say what the result will be to-day; maybe not for several days. Did I understand you to say that you knew this young lady, Mrs. Haliday?'

'I was going to say yes, doctor; but I do not know that I can truly say so'—and Mrs. Haliday told in a few words all they knew of Martha.

'She boards at 120 Morton Street, you say?' asked the doctor, when she had finished.

'So she told Jessie.'

'Then I had better take her round there at once, as it is such a short distance.'

'Oh, no' replied Mrs. Haliday, decidedly, 'We will keep her to-night, and see how she is in the morning. She may be better after a good night's rest, and I cannot bear to send the poor girl to a boarding-house to be neglected.'

The doctor went away, and Mrs. Haliday and Jessie put Martha to bed as they would have done a baby, she making no resistance, but submitting without a word to all they did. Once, as Jessie was bending over her, she looked up and smiled faintly, but that was all. After they had done all they could for her comfort, they went softly away into the next room, thinking she might sleep; and Mrs. Haliday told Jessie what the doctor had said.

'Mother, do you remember what you said to me when I was wishing I could help her?' asked Jessie. 'You said, 'may-be you can, some day.' It looks very much as if that were coming true, doesn't it?'

'Do you know, what I have been thinking, Jessie, ever since she was brought in here? That may be this is a special work that the Master wants us to do for one of his little ones. If we do really believe that he orders *all* our lives, and that, if we really want to work for him, he gives us just the work he wants us to do, then I think we ought to consider this is a very plain showing of his will.'

'But if she should be very ill, mother—you're not very strong, you know—and she is almost an entire stranger. Do you think it would be right for you to wear yourself out for her?'

'The Master wore himself out for his enemies. If she should be very ill, I think he will give me the strength I need. He may have some special reason for sending her here for us to take care of. Are you not willing to do it for his sake, dear?'

'Oh, mother, yes, indeed! I was only thinking of you. But if she is ill, you must let me be the nurse, and I will obey all your directions. In that way it will not be so hard for you.'

'Well, childie, we shall see. Let it be as the Lord wills, and then it will be all right.'

Mrs. Haliday said all this simply, and as if she were speaking of some every-day occurrence. She was one of the very few who not only say that they trust their Lord, but really do it.

Very early the next morning while it was yet scarcely light, Mrs. Haliday was awakened by the sound of moaning. Hastening into the next room, she found Martha, not as she had been the night before—lying white and motionless, with dull, half shut eyes—but tossing her arms about restlessly, while her head moved constantly from side to side, her face was deeply flushed, and her eyes wild and glistening with fever. She did not notice Mrs. Haliday at all, but moaned and muttered incoherently.

'It has been decided for me,' said Mrs. Haliday to herself. 'I am afraid the poor child is going to be very ill, and I cannot send her away now. Lord, give me strength and wisdom, and I will do all I can for her.'

As soon as it was light the doctor was sent for.

'Brain fever, Mrs. Haliday,' said he after a brief examination. 'I thought very likely it would be that. Now, what are you going to do?'

'I'm going to nurse her to the very best of my ability; and, with your help and God's blessing, save her life.'

'Upon my word!' exclaimed the doctor, in astonishment. 'Going to give your time and strength to nursing a sick girl about whom you know almost nothing? Have you considered the matter thoroughly? Your first duty is to your own health, you know.'

'There is another way of looking at it, doctor,' replied Mrs. Haliday, with a smile. 'I *have* considered the matter thoroughly, and I know what sickness is. Will you attend to your patient now, please?'

The doctor said no more; but from that moment he worked as faithfully for Martha as ever physician did for patient.

'I am afraid we must cut her hair,' he said after a day or two. 'It will all come out, if she lives, and there is so much of it that it will be a serious hindrance to our efforts for her.'

So Mrs. Haliday cut the long, beautiful locks close up to the throbbing, burning head, and laid them away. But first they brought whatever belonged to Martha from the boarding-house.

They who seek for larger liberty than that bounded by the doctrines of Christ are apt to bite at the gilded hook of Satan.

When Spring began.

While roaming in the woods one day,
I asked the question, half in play.
"Who can tell when spring began?"
Straightway the answer came. "*I* can!"
And Robin Redbreast cocked his head.
"All right! Then pray proceed," I said.

"I must," said he, "express surprise
That any one with two good eyes,
Or even one, should fail to see
Spring's coming *must* depend on me.
When I come, then will come the spring,
And that's the gist of the whole thing."

"Ho, ho! He, he! Well, I declare!"
A Squirrel chuckled, high in air.
"That is too droll—that you should bring,
Instead of being brought by, spring.
I hadn't meant to boast, but now
The cause of truth will not allow
My silence; so I'll merely state
That spring for me must *always* wait.
The thing admits not of a doubt:
Spring can't begin till I come out."

"Well, bless my stars! For pure conceit,"
Began the Brook, "you two do beat
All I have heard. As if 'twere true
Spring never came at all till you
Were born, and can't come when you're dead!
I'm sorry, sir, you've been misled,
But I can set you right. I know
Spring comes when I begin to flow.
When my ice melts, and not till then,
Spring dares to venture forth again."

"Whew!" sneered the Breeze, in high disdain,
"You're wrong as they are, it is plain.
When I first came, not long ago,
I found you naught but ice and snow.
'Twas my warm breath, you thankless thing,
That broke your bands and brought the spring.
The robins and the squirrels all
Come only when they hear me call.
In fact, I may assert with truth
I am the spring itself, in sooth.
Spring's here because I'm here, and when
I leave, you'll have no spring again."

—*St. Nicholas.*

How Queen Bess ate.

A reader of Kenilworth is apt to grow enthusiastic over the days of "good Queen Bess," and her brilliant court. If, however, he wishes to know how thoroughly Scott's magic pen has bewildered him, let him read any history which reveals the style in which the Queen and her court lived. He would be surprised to find that such were her surroundings that few of the laboring class of to-day would endure them.

The serving was of the roughest kind. Huge joints of meat were brought to the table on the roasting spits. The carver held the meat, with one hand while he cut it with the other, and the guests helped themselves with their fingers. After eating what they wished, they threw the remnants to the dogs and cats under the table.

There were no forks with which to take up the meat and no plates to hold it. Huge slices of bread served for plates, and were called trenchers. These became soaked with gravy, and were often eaten with relish; if left, they were gathered in a basket and given to the poor.

The furnishing of the immense palaces corresponded with the rudeness of the tables. The rooms were large and lofty, but uncarpeted, with floors covered with nothing better than rushes.

The furniture was scanty, indicating little taste in style or execution, and the great rooms looked bare and cheerless. The homes of New England mechanics to-day are far more comfortable than the palace of the great English Queen.

Yet they did a great deal of work in those days of rude living. It was the brilliant age of English literature and statesmanship. There was much "high thinking" then, showing that mental and moral causes are more operative on men than physical causes.—*Youth's Companion.*

A man travelling in a wild part of Pennsylvania went out for a walk, leaving his dog at the hotel. He didn't think much of dogs, and wished this one was farther away.

Looking among some great rocks beside a lonely path, he saw something shining in a sort of cave down below. He squeezed himself through, fell several feet, and then found he had got into a prison and could not get out. What he had seen shining was only a piece of a glass bottle.

He sat down in misery, wondering what his friends would think had become of him. Night was coming on; through the opening above him he could see a star. He tried to sleep. The hours were long till daylight, and still he saw no hope for himself.

At last he heard the bark of a dog. Presently his dog looked down through the opening, overjoyed that he had found his master. There he barked and whined for some time. Then he went away. Would he come again?

How dependent the man felt on that poor, despised animal! He prayed that the dog might not forsake him, but might bring back help. But perhaps some one would kill him for barking and acting as if he was going mad. When he heard the dog once more, how glad, how thankful he felt. A boy now looked into the prison, and was surprised to hear a human voice. Then came help, and the prisoner was free.

Letter from Professor Lawson.

CROP SICK FARMS.

HALIFAX, 12th APRIL, 1884.

There has been some interesting and useful correspondence in the EASTERN CHRONICLE on the subject of Crop sick farms, and How to restore them. When a field or farm gets tired of yielding a crop, the first thing to be done is to ascertain the reason why? In Pictou County, as throughout the Atlantic coast districts of North America generally, the reason why is 'not far to seek.' The land has been cropped and cropped and cropped again, until its power of yielding a crop has been exhausted. That power depends upon the presence in the soil of the constituents required by the plant for its food. The ones required in most quantity (carbonic acid gas and water) exist in our soils and atmosphere in abundance, and we are not put to any expense in supplying them. But there are others that exist naturally in only very small proportion and it is these that become exhausted by cropping. They are potash, phosphoric acid, ammonia. A potato cannot be grown without a supply of all three, but it requires most potash; a grain of wheat or oats cannot be grown without all three but it requires most phosphoric acid; a leaf of clover cannot be grown without all three but it requires most ammonia, some of which however is derived from a natural source of supply. Every crop taken off the land impoverishes it in these essential compounds, in certain proportions. In order to maintain its fertility we restore the waste materials of the farm: animals in feeding retain only a portion of the phosphate and ammonia material of their food, and little or none of the potash. The manure thus restores the fertility where the products of the farm are fed upon it and the manure properly cared for. We cannot however *increase* the fertility of the land in this way. To do so we must either buy extra feeding material, to be fed on the farm, or else buy artificial manures. These so called 'Fertilizers,' whether natural guano, crushed bones or dust, superphosphate, potash salts or nitrate of soda, all contain one or more of the compounds necessary to feed the plant. The most perfect of these manures are some guanos and alkalized phosphates—the latter containing the three essential compounds in an available condition, viz.: phosphoric acid, potash and ammonia. The comparative value of fertilizers depends almost entirely upon the percentage of these ingredients present in a suitable form, that is in the chemical state of combination which renders them soluble in water, and in the mechanical state of a fine dry powder which enables them to be evenly distributed over the land. A good superphosphate supplies all the food wants of the plant, but it is always advantageous to use with it either manure or any hygroscopic material in order to secure, in the dry season, that amount of moisture in the soil which is necessary to enable the plant to take up its food. A plant feeds on solid food, and drinks water as an auxiliary to dissolve it; the plant on the other hand, cannot even take in its mineral food until it has become perfectly dissolved in the water in the soil. The above will, I hope, be a satisfactory answer to the question put by one of your backwood correspondents; I forget the exact words of his enquiry, but it was to the effect whether Superphosphates were worth using on a wornout farm. The above, being interpreted, reads emphatically YES.

Yours truly,
GEORGE LAWSON.

—*Eastern Chronicle.*