

Family Reading.

His Mother's Songs.

Beneath the hot midsummer sun
The men had marched all day;
And now beside a rippling stream
Upon the grass they lay.

Tiring of games and idle jests,
As swept the hours along,
They called to one who mused apart,
'Come, friend, give us a song.'

'I fear I cannot please,' he said;
'The only songs I know
Are those my mother used to sing
For me long years ago.'

'Sing one of those,' a rough voice cried,
'There's none but true men here;
To every mother's son of us
A mother's songs are dear.'

Then sweetly rose the singer's voice
Amid unwonted calm,
'Am I a soldier of the Cross,
A follower of the Lamb!

And shall I fear to own His cause—
The very stream was stilled,
And hearts that never throbb'd with fear
With tender thoughts were filled.

Ended the song; the singer said,
As to his feet he rose,
'Thanks to you all, my friends, good night,
God grant us sweet repose.'

'Sing us one more,' the captain begged;
The soldier bent his head,
Then glancing 'round, with smiling lips,
'You'll join with me,' he said.

'We'll sing this old familiar air,
Sweet as the bugle call,
'All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall.'

Ah! wondrous was the old tune's spell
As on the singer sang;
Man after man fell into line,
And loud the voices rang.

The songs are done, the camp is still,
Nought but the stream is heard;
But ah! the depths of every soul
By those old hymns are stirred.

And up from many a bearded lip,
In whispers soft and low,
Rises a prayer the mother taught
The boy, long years ago.

New Select Serial.

A DEACON'S DAUGHTER.

BY MISS LILLIAN F. WELLS.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARTHA AT HER FATHER'S HOME.

These were beautiful days for Martha, now. Yes, they were beauty-full—a blessed, never-dying beauty of peace and joy and love. She felt that she had only just begun to live—and indeed, was not that literally true?

But the pleasant times with the Halidays must soon be over now. She dreaded to go away from these dear ones who had brought her to her Saviour; had taught her to love him, and through him to love every soul he has made. But she had decided to go home for an indefinite stay. Not to Huldah's, this time; but to her own home. Her feelings toward that home were changed in the other change that had taken place in her. She wanted to do what she could to make amends for the past—the want of love and helpfulness in her childhood and girlhood, and the neglect and indifference of the past six years.

But the Halidays pleaded for just a little longer stay. She had grown very dear to them now, and they could not bear to think of her going. June was almost gone before they finally yielded to her determination to leave them. She promised to stay three days more, until the first day of July, and then she was really to go. Since they would not accept the money she pressed upon them, she made them promise to come up to Sherwood in August and make a visit at the old farm-house.

It was the evening before her departure, and Martha stood at the sitting-room window, looking out thoughtfully into the still golden west. Mrs. Haliday and Jessie were busy for a few moments in another part of the house, and Richard was out. But he came in presently, and she heard him running up the stairs and coming quickly across the room to where she stood. She turned and spoke.

'Oh, is it you, Miss Martha?' he asked. 'I was not quite sure in the dim light.'

'Did you want some one else?' inquired Martha.

'No, I want no one else.'

There was something in his tone that made her glance up at him involuntarily. What light there was still in the west enabled her to see his face quite distinctly. It was not a handsome face at all; but was as good and manly a face as ever belonged to a good and manly man. He was looking down at Martha now with an expression that she could not understand.

'I want no one else,' he repeated, softly. 'I have a secret to tell you, Martha, I—'

'Oh, no, no, Mr. Haliday, don't say it! I can't hear it, indeed I can't!' cried Martha, in a tone of great distress. Then she turned and hurried from the room, and he did not see her again that night.

Richard Haliday stood where she had left him, leaning his head against the window-frame in bitter disappointment. He had felt so sure that Martha would listen to him gladly! He wanted her to, and he thought—yes, he had been sure—that she could not refuse him. But, perhaps he had been too hasty. Perhaps, if he were to wait a little, she might listen to his secret, after all. He would be brave, and wait. Then, by-and-by, he would venture again. Then, if she still refused—but he would not think of that. He would say nothing to his mother or Jessie about the matter. In their love both for himself and for Martha they might unintentionally say something to her that would make it harder for him.

Morning came with its hurry and bustle, and Martha went away. She and Richard parted with a quiet 'Good-bye,' and no one guessed what had passed between them.

If Martha had thought coming back to Sherwood pleasant two years ago, it was ten-fold more so now. Everything in the familiar landscape seemed clothed with a new beauty. She felt that every hill and meadow and brook and tree was dear to her, and, as Amos drove into the yard at the old farm-house, she wondered how she could ever have thought the place so dreary.

Mrs. Stirling and Roxy were getting supper; but the sound of the wagon coming into the yard, and Amos' sonorous 'Whos!' brought them both to the door. Martha stepped quickly out upon the wooden 'horse-block,' and, running to her mother, threw both arms around her neck, and kissed her as she had never kissed her before.

'Oh, mother, I'm so glad to get home!' cried she. 'Where's father?'

'Why, he—he hain't come in from the field yet,' said Mrs. Stirling. She was wholly unprepared for such a warm greeting, and it bewildered her.

Martha had not written to them of her entrance into life. She wanted her father to know first of all, and she longed to have the joy of telling him with her own lips, and of asking his forgiveness for having so long tried and grieved him. So Mrs. Stirling wondered, and was glad. Roxy stood by with a broad smile on her good-natured face, and Martha turned to her.

'Well, Roxy, I don't see but you look precisely as you did the last time I saw you,' said she, taking the girl's hand, red hand in hers.

'I can't say the same of you, though,' returned Roxy, blushing with pleasure.

'Oh, I shall soon be plump and rosy!' said Martha, brightly. 'There's father, now,' she added, as she saw him coming slowly up the path. He had grown old fast in these two years since she had seen him; he stooped more, and his hair was whiter. A mist came over Martha's eyes as she looked at him, and remembered how little she had ever done to cheer him. I think nothing could have given clearer evidence of the new life that was in her than did her altered feeling toward her father. She stepped out upon the door-stone, and stood waiting for him with a bright smile.

'So, Marthy, ye've come home again, have ye?'

'Yes, father.' Then, laying her hands on his shoulders, she bent and kissed him. It was the first kiss she remembered to have ever given him. He looked at her in astonishment.

'Aren't you glad to see me, father?' she asked, gently, pretending not to notice the look.

'Yes, yes—of course I be,' replied

the bewildered deacon, adding, 'Ye're lookin' better'n I expected to see ye.'

Mrs. Stirling called them to supper just then. All through the meal Martha talked brightly of her journey, praised her mother's preserves and Roxy's bread and butter, and was altogether so different from what she had ever been before, that the others knew not what to think. Martha saw this, and reproached herself anew for what she had been, or rather, what she had not been, to them.

After supper, when Mrs. Stirling and Roxy were washing the dishes in the 'sink-room,' and the deacon had taken his chair out upon the broad door-stone for his usual twilight rest, Martha came and stood behind him, leaning on the back of his chair. It was a beautiful evening, and Martha's eyes wandered admiringly over the hills and meadows lying so green and peaceful in the soft sunset light. She had always loved them; but now it was with a new and better love, for she could say: 'My Father made them all.' She was silent for a few minutes, and then said, her voice trembling a little: 'Father, I have something to tell you that I think will make you very glad. I know you have been praying for me all my life, and it must often have seemed to you as if the answer was never coming. But God heard your prayers, and now—the answer has come. He has brought me to know his dear Son, and I have given myself to him, to be his forever. I haven't been a good daughter; but I am very, very sorry for all I have done to displease you. Will you forgive me, father?'

Deacon Stirling made no answer. For a moment he sat motionless, then, with a half-whispered 'Bless the Lord!' he rose and went into the house. Martha did not see him again for an hour or more, and then his face wore an expression she had never seen there before. His stern lines were softened, and there was a subdued gladness in it. A peace and joy, wholly new in his experience, had come to make it 'light' for him 'at evening-time.'

There was no doubt that Deacon Stirling was a sincere Christian—narrow in his views and overrigid in matters of mere outward observance, it is true, but heartily desiring the glory of God and the progress of his kingdom. In his deep thankfulness for the answer to his prayers for Martha he had humbled himself before God with a new realization of his goodness and mercy, and had received into his soul such a rich blessing as our gracious God delights to give to the truly humble and thankful.

Martha slept in her own little room that night. It was not changed at all; but she looked at it with a different feeling now. Kneeling down beside the bed, and hiding her face in the faded patchwork quilt, she shed some very penitential, humble tears. She remembered the hour that she had spent in this room two years ago, and the wretched unbelief in which her soul had deliberately wrapped itself, refusing to search and see if there might be any better clothing for it. But that soul had been brought low before its God; its misery had been made manifest in the light of his truth; and now, its loathsome garment cast aside, it was clad in the robe of Christ's righteousness.

'Oh, my patient, faithful Saviour!' cried Martha, 'I bless thee for all, yes all the way by which thou hast led me. I bless thee that thou hast sought me, and found me, and saved me. I bless thee that thou hast so mercifully forgiven the past, and I ask thee again to give me patience and love to make any atonement that I can for all that I have done and left undone. Let me not lose sight of thee for an instant; but keep me walking close, close to thee, so that with thee ever before me, I shall be only a humble, trusting little child always.'

And with the help, which he never failed to give her, Martha did make an abundant atonement. A new atmosphere of hope and good cheer filled the old house, as fresh air and sweet sunshine fill a long-closed room when the doors and windows are thrown open. Very gradually there was wrought a change in the appearance of the house. The dreary parlor was no longer left in solitude and darkness. First, Martha persuaded her father to put blinds on

the front windows; then the old paper shades came down, and white, muslin curtains, tied back with scarlet cord and tassels, took their places; a few fine engravings found their way from Martha's treasures to the bare walls; on one side of the room stood the carved book-case, Miss Goodwin's priceless bequest; the claw-footed mahogany table held some handsomely-bound books and a tall, bronze lamp, that had been lying in the farm-house garret for two years, packed away in a box containing the few things that Martha had selected to keep when Mrs. Iredell's furniture was sold; there were some statuettes and an ebony clock on the mantel, that had come out of the same box. Added to all these, Martha was constantly bringing in flowers and tall grasses and ferns and sprays of running vines from the woods and fields.

Mrs. Stirling was dismayed at first at having the windows of her 'best room' kept open all day long, and all that mess of green stuff brought in to clutter up, but Martha begged to have her way so earnestly that Mrs. Stirling yielded, and Martha did what she listed to beautify the rooms. And little by little her mother grew into the habit of sitting down in the rocking chair by the south windows of this same 'best room' when she had an hour or two to rest in the long, warm, quiet afternoons.

Martha had asked that she might have one of the unoccupied front rooms up-stairs for her own, to be arranged as she pleased. Mrs. Stirling said yes, and straightway Martha set to work. Ingenuity and a trifling expense soon brought about a marvelous change, and even the deacon, whom Martha induced to come up and see it, declared that it was 'as pretty as a picture.'

From that first evening of Martha's home-coming, Deacon Stirling had changed. With a deeper faith and a more real love to God in his heart, he daily grew less stern and intolerant. With Martha he was almost gentle. She watched over him with loving care, in every way in her power ministering to his comfort and pleasure. When he was in the house she devoted her time entirely to him, and it pleased and touched her inexpressibly to see how he liked to have her with him. If she were out of the room when he came in, he would not sit down or be satisfied till he had called her; and no matter what she was doing she always came at once, with a bright face, ready to do what he wanted of her.

Martha was happy. There was plenty for her to do; and when the heart is glad and the hands are busy, the days go swiftly and brightly. She insisted on helping with the housework, though Roxy constantly rebelled against that, and took care that there should be very little of it for her to do. Roxy considered Martha a perfect wonder of beauty, knowledge, and goodness, and regarded her with a feeling akin to worship. Never had any one shown her so much kindness before. She was completely overwhelmed when Martha gave her a new dress, some white aprons and linen collars, and, most delightful of all, two yards of ribbon, one pink, the other blue. Pitying the girl's ignorance, and finding that she would be glad to learn, Martha began teaching her to read; and in various ways did what she could to make Roxy's dull, hard-working life brighter.

With all this there were long, pleasant afternoons with Huldah. No one had ever known how Huldah had missed her sister. And now that the wanderer had come home—home to her father's house and home to her God—Huldah rejoiced unspeakably.

There was only one cloud in Martha's bright sky; but that was one she had brought there herself, and it would not be driven away.

Day after day, while making her home bright with her presence and her handiwork, her heart was filled with thoughts of Richard Haliday. He was not only worthy of her, but she felt herself unworthy of him. He was so strong and good, so kind and gentle, and yet so manly! He had loved her, and would have told her so, but—she would not listen! It had come to her suddenly that night—the knowledge that he cared for her—she was so unprepared for it! The remembrance of what she had suffered a few months before came back to her vividly, and she had hastily forbidden Richard to say any

more. But if he had really loved her, did he not love her yet? Would he not very naturally come to her again for a final answer? She believed he would. She took it all to the Lord, and waited.

Mrs. Haliday and Jessie were to delay their visit till September, having friends along the way whom they wished to visit first. Perhaps Richard would come with them.

August had come, with long, hazy, heated days. Martha liked to take her work and sit under the great walnut tree on the shaded side of the house, and listen to the late summer music as it floated all about her in the still afternoon air—the chirp of crickets, the songs of locusts and katydids as well as birds, and the pleasant sounds from the harvest fields.

She was sitting there sewing, one afternoon toward the middle of the month, and making a very pretty picture, quite unconsciously, in the fresh pink muslin dress, framed in by green grass and swaying boughs. She had fulfilled her prophecy, and was "plump and rosy again." Her hair curled in short, dark rings around her neck and forehead, making her look younger than she was. Her face was full of peace and gladness.

Presently, amid the varied sounds, she heard the click of the gate, opening and closing. Glancing up, she saw a tall man in a linen coat and a straw hat coming toward her across the yard. She sprang to her feet, and over went her work-basket, its contents scattering in the tall grass unheeded. With cheeks growing rosier than her dress, Martha stood still, looking as if she scarcely knew whether to run away or stay where she was.

Before she had decided, Richard Haliday was before her, holding out his hand.

'I've tried to wait patiently,' he said, 'but I could not wait any longer. Are you glad to see me? And will you let me tell you my secret now, Martha?'

He knew the answer before she said it. 'Yes, Richard, you may tell it now.'

THE END.

Gardening for Young People.

Perhaps the sweetest recollections of early youth are associated with the cultivation of a small patch in the garden given to a boy or girl for their special cultivation. Nothing will pay better than a little help given to boys and girls in the management of such piece of ground. The pleasure of watching the growth, and the patience exercised over "my garden," are most wholesome for such young people, to say nothing of the benefits arising from habits of observation, and the discrimination required to distinguish weeds from plants.

A few thoughts on this subject from *The Christian* will interest others besides our young readers. They will afford seasonable lessons and profitable reflections:—

It is no easy matter to keep even a small garden tidy. There is first of all a good bit of digging and hoeing to do; then the plants must be put in and the seed sown. In the hot, dry weather they must be watered, and last, though not least, the weeds must be rooted out. And very troublesome these weeds are to most young gardeners. I used to wonder where they came from, and often mistook some of them for flowers and watered them carefully, thinking they were some of the seeds I had sown. Then when they grew bigger, of course I was disappointed.

I asked the gardener to tell me who sowed all these troublesome ugly weeds. "Ah," said he, "weeds never want any sowing, they come up of themselves fast enough; and if you don't weed them out they will soon spoil your garden."

These weeds do indeed seem to come of their own accord, and the highest wall will not keep them out. Some, like thistle and dandelion seeds, come floating through the summer air, borne up by their little feathery plumes; others are brought by birds, and some you may have noticed are furnished with little hooks that catch in your dress, as you ramble after flowers in the woods and wayside hedges.

Now weeds will always prove the strongest if you leave a garden long uncared for. Do you wonder why? Because they are the natural production of the soil; and the sweetest pinks, lobelias, fuschias, and most of your garden pets, are little strangers from foreign lands that require a great deal

of care to enable them to hold their own.

Have you ever seen a neglected garden? Oh, it is a sad sight, for the richer the soil the more luxuriantly the weeds will grow, really choking the poor flowers. Can you remember what Solomon wrote about a neglected plot of ground, that he passed one day as he was walking in the country? It was the field of an idle man, and he says he found it "all grown over with thorns, and nettles covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down." Then Solomon goes on to say, "I saw and considered it well; I looked and received instruction." If this great and wise king was not above learning a lesson from an untidy field, let us see if we cannot find something in our garden to think about.

You may not all have a little garden of your own to dig up and plant seeds in. Yet you each have a little garden to take care of, a little garden that may become beautiful with sweet flowers or overrun with weeds.

Have you guessed already what I mean? I think your minds and hearts are like little plots of ground prepared by loving hands to receive good seed, that may grow up and yield a rich harvest. What pains are taken with them; how patiently your kind parents and teachers try to prepare you for the life that lies before you.

And yet when they have done their utmost, little weeds may be growing up unseen by them among the other plants. Evil birds may have dropped seeds that will spring up into bad habits and choke many of the sweet flowers and fruits of the Spirit; such as love, joy, gentleness and faith.

I told you that when a garden was left to itself the weeds there grow very rank in the rich soil. It is a solemn thing to remember that if the great enemy of your souls finds an uncared-for garden, he is sure to plant weeds there; and then, oh how sad the harvest will be! How quickly weeds spread! It is said "Ill weeds grow apace," and if weeds are allowed to grow up in one little garden, they will quickly fly over into the next, and from that spread further still. Thus you see no one has a right to think they may grow what they like in their own gardens without making any difference to others. For it does matter a great deal; every one has an influence either for good or bad on all who come near them, and none can say where this influence may stop.

We read in the Bible that Adam had a garden entrusted to his care. When he sinned and was turned out of that sweet garden the earth was cursed through his sin and brought forth thorns and thistles; what a picture of his own heart, where he had allowed evil thoughts to spring up into evil actions, destroying all his peace and happiness. Ah, if we had only our own strength to look to, we might well look hopelessly over our little gardens, knowing how quickly the weeds grow, and how strong they become.

But there is one Friend always near, who is both able and willing to do what we cannot. You know who this mighty Friend is. Where Jesus comes even the desert places in our lives will blossom as the rose. He will teach us how to get rid of the weeds, and will help us to tear them up at any cost. He will water the good seed with the refreshing dew of His Holy Spirit, and shine on it with the sunshine of His love.

When the great harvest home comes you would not like to have only dry leaves to lay down at His feet who gave His life for you! Then go to Him now in this early spring time of your life, and ask Him to take your heart and life, and make them what he would have them to be. We do not always know the weeds from the flowers, but we can trust Him to make no mistakes. Welcome this dear Saviour into your hearts, and then amid all the sin of this world's wilderness He will make and keep each heart "a little spot of hallowed ground," bearing much fruit to His honor and glory.

I speak as a man of the world to men of the world; and I say to you, Search the Scripture. The Bible is the book of all others to be read in all ages and in all conditions of human life; not to be read once or twice through, and then laid aside, but to be read in small portions of one or two chapters every day, and never to be intermitted, unless by some overruling necessity. So great is my veneration for the Bible, that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hopes that they will prove useful citizens to their country, and respected members of society.—John Quincy Adams.

Cincinnati has six miles of rum-holes. New York has seventeen and London seventy-three—almost a hundred miles in but three cities. And what a road to travel! Flooded by scalding tears, paved with broken hearts!