

The Fireside.

THE GIVER.

John 5: 16.

BY ALICE VAN ORDEN.

"Giver of all," for Thy best gift We lift our grateful praise, And for the love that gave the Christ Our thankful hearts upraise.

This gift is life, eternal life, To all who will believe, And ev'ry faithful, trusting one The blessing may receive.

We take Thy gift, so freely sent To save the world from sin, And find Thy heaven in our heart Thyself hath entered in.

AN EPISODE.

BY HELEN HALL FARLEY.

"Well, you must be tired, but you certainly look as if you had been enjoying yourself," said Elizabeth, as Aunt Margaret came in from a long tramp, looking flushed and happy to that degree that we mentally termed her usually plain face, radiant.

"I have enjoyed myself," was Aunt Margaret's rejoinder. She took off her hat, and sat down in an easy chair, smiling at her niece in a way that meant she had a story to tell.

"Go on," said Elizabeth, "tell me where you've been to please you so."

"I had taken a long walk down to the seashore, and down the bank as for as Meriton's, but I was on my way home when suddenly I was taken with the 'nose bleed!' I was on Forest Avenue when it began and walked fast, hoping to reach home before I had used up my two handkerchiefs. But, by the time I reached the corner of Forest and Corell, my handkerchiefs were soaked. I felt dizzy, too, just as I was wondering what I would do, a dear old lady, who had been sitting on a shady piazza, arose up quickly and coming down the walk, said gently:

"Come in here, dear, and let me help you."

"Well, you can imagine my relief and surprise to be invited in by a perfect stranger, and above all to be called 'dear.' Of course I went in, following the old lady through a quaint, old-fashioned hall into a beautiful bath-room tiled in white and old blue. There she took off my hat and relieved me of my bloody handkerchiefs. I bathed my face and hands, the old lady turning the fresh water on and off for me and helping me otherwise in various ways. It was some time before my nose stopped bleeding, and then I must have looked quite pale, for my hostess said:

"Come now, and sit down awhile; it will not do to go out until you are rested."

"Nothing loath I went with her to the sitting-room and was given a chair that I christened then and there 'Lullaby,' it was so soft, so restful, so comforting. And such a sitting-room! In all my life I never saw anything to equal it. It was large and low with three big windows reaching to the floor and opening upon a broad veranda, beyond which were green grass and flowering shrubs. On the floor was an elegant carpet, evident-

ly new, so soft and thick that it seemed as if one was treading on moss. It was of a beautiful pattern, daisies, clover and buttercups sprinkled all over it. Everything else in the room was old, not old in the sense of shabbiness, but old as a lovely character grows old in richness and beauty.

"A magnificent table of solid mahogany was in the centre of the room. It was richly carved and highly polished. It was octagon in shape and possessed eight tiny drawers with glass knobs. Oh, it was a treasure! Then there were spindle legged tables and a wonderful sofa with a high carved back and piled with pillows of many hues made of rich tapestry and heavy damask. But the most beautiful piece of furniture in the room was a magnificent chest of drawers which stood just opposite a fine mahogany china closet filled with rare old china. This chest of drawers was made of several kinds of wood, the body of it being mahogany, the drawers rose-wood, the panels satin-wood. It had a swell front and was graced by six small mirrors arranged in a half circle over the cabinet-top. There must have been at least a dozen drawers large and small, each having shining brass handles.

"But after all the most beautiful of all in the room, was my hostess, with her lovely face and charming ways. Now that I am here it seems almost like a dream that I have seen her. If I should tell you that she had silvery hair and tender blue eyes, what would that signify? For you know dozens of old ladies to whom that description would apply. My hostess possesses an indescribable charm, it has come to her doubtless, because of her beautiful life, it is the majesty of a sunset of a life worth living."

Aunt Margaret stopped talking.

"Please go on," urges Elizabeth, "what else did she do for you?"

"She treated me to some delicious cake and lemonade, which a quaint old colored woman brought in, and then when I would have gone she begged me to tarry awhile until my handkerchiefs were dry. I was glad of an excuse to remain longer. Presently there danced into the room a lovely little girl with fair face and sweet blue eyes and smiling lips. Her yellow hair curled about her forehead in soft golden rings, the rest of it falling down her back in shining curls. She was cherubic.

"Grandma, dear," she said, throwing her dimpled arms about the old lady's neck, 'Can I take lunch with Marion? she has invited me.'

"She had not seen me, and when the old lady gave her consent she danced off without having been presented.

"What a lovely grandchild you have! I said admiringly. My hostess did not answer right away. She sat there with a sweet thoughtful look upon her face. Presently she said with a smile, 'Edith is not really my grandchild, but I couldn't love her any more if she were.'

"Nor she you," I said thinking of the love light in the fair little face. 'And it is the same with Edith's father,' continued the old lady, 'he seems

like my very own child, and he looks on me as his mother.'

"Well," I said, 'there are very strong attachments—sometimes—between a mother and her step-child.' She laughed indulgently.

"But Edith's father is not my step-child, he is no relation whatever! I will tell you how we came to find each other if you would like to hear about it."

"I expressed my desire to hear her, and she continued.

"I was a widow when I met Francis Hoyt, I had been on to Pennsylvania to bury our only child, a boy, in our old family plot. I was returning home sad and lonely. In front of me, on the cars, sat a small lad, who had been crying and whose face expressed anxiety and fear. When the conductor came along, the boy looked as if he wanted to hide himself.

"What, you here, Francis! he said in surprise. 'What are you up to now? And where are you going? Hand over your ticket.'

"I haven't any ticket, admitted the boy, his eyes full of tears.

"I pitied the poor child so lonely and sorrowful, and I asked the conductor to tell me what he knew about him, and he did:

"The boy was an orphan without either home or money. His father had been an ignorant laborer, his mother a woman who had loved the intoxicating cup. He had been living with an aunt who regarded him as an unwelcome intruder as she had a neglected brood of her own, and she had treated him with cruelty.

"He isn't a bad boy as boys go," said the conductor, 'but he's come up so far in a vile hole, and what can one expect? I hate to send him back, but that's what I've got to do at the next station.'

"But he did not send him back. I had quite a talk with the little fellow before we reached the next station, and the result was that I took him home with me. I had no thought of keeping him at the time, I only meant to give him a lift—but as the days went on, I kept thinking that I ought to adopt this child for Christ's sake. Still I was not ready to do it, for my thoughts were with my own little son who had been taken from my arms. But there came a day when my selfishness laid low, and then in my heart there was born a great love for little Francis. I adopted him and brought him up as I would have reared my own son had he lived. I had money, plenty of it, and Francis was thoroughly educated. He grew up a noble lad and a loving one. He was married when he was twenty-five, and with his bride went to the far west to make his fortune, he said in his cheery way. He begged me to go too, but I couldn't endure the thought of leaving my old home, this home where I was born, so I said good-bye and God speed to my dear adopted son. I was very lonely after he was gone, but his letters came regularly every week, and I felt that I had not lost him.

"Ten years rolled on, one day a letter came with the sad news that Francis' wife was dead. Other troubles were at hand. There was a great financial crisis, and suddenly my wealth took wings, and I found myself in my old age penniless. Even my loved home and everything in it must go under the hammer. I did not write to Francis about it, for I

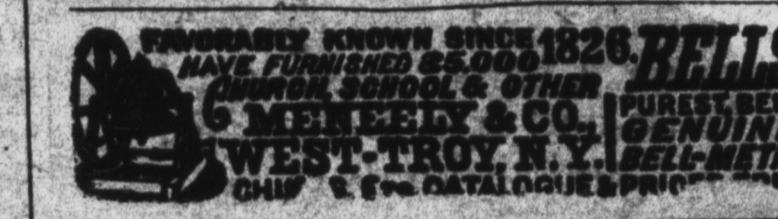
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WOULD HAVE TO STOP HER WORK AND SIT DOWN.



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knew he was grieving over his terrible bereavement. I did not want to add a drop to the bitterness of his cup. Well, the day came, after a sleepless night, and the auction began. You can imagine my agony with the poor-house staring me in the face, for I did not want to be a burden upon my adopted son who had a little daughter to support. During the auction I was in the house next door for I wanted to know when it was over. I had my hat on, and my wraps beside me, for as soon as everything was sold, I was going somewhere I did not know, where I did not much care, for I was dazed in my great trouble. I sat where I could not see or hear anything of the auction, but it was the shortest auction I ever heard of. "Presently some one came in, and said it was all over, one man had bought the house and all that was it. Then the door opened and she and the Lord be praised, there, right before me with his arms extended stood Francis. "Mother," he cried, folding me in his arms." Aunt Margaret paused. Her eyes were full of tears so was her voice. "Go on," begged Elizabeth. "Well, the end of it all was that Francis just lifted that dear little woman in his arms and carried her right over to her own home. For was hers, he had bought it for her and there they all live together, and his beautiful little girl and beloved old lady. She was just telling me how happy they were, and