

The Family Circle

A FIG FOR PROVERBS

At every turn of 'life's dull round'
(I've heard good people say),
A wholesome proverb may be found
To light one on the way.
But though I've often sought the aid
Of maxims old and trite
In application, I'm afraid,
They've seldom worked out right.

'Faint heart fair lady never won'—
What courage in the thought
Till some one adds, and not in fun,
'O'er-confidence wins naught!'
To 'wed in haste,' says the old song,
Is to 'repent at leisure,'
While others sing, 'Engagements long
Ne'er end in wedded pleasure.'

That 'absence makes hearts fonder' might
Seem clear and well defined
Until we're told that 'out of sight'
Means also 'out of mind.'
'Fine feathers make fine birds,' 'tis urged,
Yet that we, too, must ban;
The maxim is at once submerged
In 'Clothes don't make the man.'

'Home, home sweet home! No place like home!'
What joy those words impart!
Though some confess who sadly roam
'Home is where rests the heart.'
'Tis money makes the mare to go,'
Of course you all know that;
Yes, 'tis the root of evil,' too,
So what would you be at?

'Silence is golden' may be true
Where wordy warfare spreads,
Yet there's another adage, too—
'Still tongues lie in calves' heads.'
Again, 'Time will for no man stay,'
To suit his loves or hates,
But 'All things come,' they also say,
'To him who calmly waits.'

When proverbs thus in puzzling maze
Each other contravene,
Where lies the wisdom that we praise?
What do their teachings mean?
Where's so much choice there must be flaw,
Or I'm a senseless elf.
'Tis therefore best to simply draw
The one that suits yourself.

KENNETH'S SUCCESS

'It's no much I can do,' said Kenneth Grant to himself; 'but I'll try my best to help mother.' And that was why he sat patiently hour after hour with his fishing rod in hand, hoping at last to get something towards the meal which 'mother' hardly knew how to supply for her hungry, sturdy family of boys and girls in her Highland cottage.

There was no father to work; he was living, truly, but so ill and weak that he was only a burden now upon the wife, whose hands were already full; and so at last they had settled to leave their own land and go south to London, where friends had promised to help them, and to put the boys in the way of helping themselves as they grew older.

That day, as Kenneth sat fishing, he was thinking a great deal about the journey, wondering what this city of London might be of which he heard so much talk, and how father and the rest would fare there, so very far away from home. But he did not speak his thoughts to Jamie and the younger ones. Their heads were full of Kenneth's success, and when they trudged home with their fish to mother they were prouder than he was of the result of his patient waiting.

A month later and the Scottish laddies were away in the south, and already they had lost something from their sturdiness and health; or, perhaps, it was that they missed the bracing air of their own mountains. But this was nothing to the sad change in the father; he sank rapidly, and was soon at rest in a crowded cemetery in the strange country.

Bitter was the poor wife's grief that she should bury him there, away from his own 'bonnie Scotland,' as she said; but Poverty is a stern master, and she had no means to return to her own kindred, or to lay him to rest amongst those who had known and loved him.

Then began the hard battle of life for the lonely woman; but Kenneth was her great comfort. The same spirit which had taught him from his earliest childhood to 'help mother' taught him now to shrink from no hardship or difficulty which lay before him. Her friends, who had brought them to the south, came forward now and put the oldest boy at a suitable school, where he might receive an education which would fit him to support himself in trade. Ah, how Kenneth worked! How he toiled by day and far into the night with that one aim—his mother—to keep her from wearying. Sneers, taunts, laughter surrounded him; his Scottish dialect, his look, his simple manners, all were made fun of by his companions; but he bore everything without murmuring or complaint.

And then the tide turned, and everyone began to find out that Kenneth Grant was more than painstaking; he was clever—brilliantly clever; and so as he grew older he was tried by praise, but even through that he remained unmoved. Simply and steadfastly he pursued his way, his one thought centered in mother and home.

All that is years ago. The little thoughtful laddie is a man now in a good way of business; he has helped himself and helped his brothers to make their way in a strange land, and the people say that the Grants have been wonderfully fortunate. But the mother knows that under God the 'fortune' has lain in the goodness and perseverance of her eldest boy, and she is a proud and happy woman as she looks round on her children, and thanks the Father in Heaven for His goodness to them all. One wish, and only one is in her heart, and that is to see her 'ain countrie' before she dies; and Kenneth means to give it to her, too, and already they are planning a visit to the old place—the cottage, the glen, and the little stream where was their happy Highland home, long, long ago.

A very quiet little story! Not much in it to cause wonder or amusement, but it bears with it its own lesson—that not by great deeds do we win the crown of success, but by faithful perseverance in common daily duty, by the steady aim at a noble purpose, we shall achieve all, and more than all, for which we hope and strive.

MISUNDERSTOOD

Perhaps it were better for most of us to complain less of being misunderstood and to take care that we don't misunderstand other people. It ought to make us pause at times to remember that each one has a stock of cut-and-dried judgment on his neighbors, and that the chances are most of them quite erroneous. What our neighbor is we may be pretty certain that he is not what we have imagined, and that many things we have thought of him are quite beside the mark. What he does we have seen, but we have no idea what may have been his thoughts and intentions. The mere surface of his character may be exposed, but of the complexity within we have not the faintest idea. People filled with self-consciousness and self-conceit are often praised as humble, while shy and reserved people are judged to be proud. Some whose life is one subtle, studied selfishness, get the name of self-sacrifice, and other silent, heroic souls are condemned for want of humanity.

NOT QUICK ENOUGH

A veterinary surgeon one day prepared a powder for a sick horse and gave it to his young assistant to administer. The assistant asked how it was to be done, and the surgeon gave him a large glass tube and told him to put the tube in the horse's mouth and blow the powder down its throat. A short time afterwards there was a great commotion, and the surgeon rushed out to find his assistant in trouble.

'Where is that medicine?' he shouted. 'What is the matter?'

The assistant coughed several times severely, and then spluttered:

'The horse blew first!'

THE GORGONZOLA LET LOOSE

A farmer from Ormskirk way went into a restaurant in Liverpool and asked for some bread and cheese. 'What kind would you like?' inquired the waiter. 'Cheshire, Cheddar, or Gorgonzola?' 'Fancy name, that last,' said the farmer. 'I think I'll try a bit o' that.' He thought it so tasty that he took a pound home to his wife and left it on the sideboard in the kitchen. Next morning he came in from his before-breakfast round and inquired if