

Christian Family.

The Day is Done.

The day is done and the darkness
Falls from the wings of night
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me
That my soul cannot resist.

Come read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,
That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of time.

For like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavor;
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start.

Who through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume,
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of the voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

—Longfellow.

Mrs. Lamson's Dignity.

"Is this Mrs. Lamson?" I asked of a sorrowful-looking woman, who sat in a big chair in her doorway rocking and sewing.

"That's what folks call me," she replied rocking faster, and never raising her eyes from the "log-cabin patchwork," which seemed to be the all-important thing on earth with her.

She then ignored my presence, making no movement to give me a seat, nor even looking at me.

"You have a great deal of poultry, I believe, Mrs. Lamson."

"I hev," was the laconic reply.

"Do you sell chickens?"

"Sometimes I do."

"And eggs?"

"I hev done sich a thing."

"Can you let me have a pair of chickens and two dozen of eggs?"

"I can if I want to; there ain't nobody to hinder me," was the strange, curt reply.

"Will you do so then?"

"I ain't obleeged to sell my hens or my eggs neither—no more than some folks is obleeged to sell their canary birds, Malta cats, and pinter dogs, that they set sich store by," was the independent and rather personal answer.

"Of course not," I said, and then I felt either my family, or my cat, or dog, or bird, must have given some offence to my techy new neighbor, for I was a stranger in the place.

"Some folks think," she added, still rocking, "that they're head and ears above other folks 'cause they got larnin' and live in cities in winter. They think country folks is all fools, and beggars to boot, and despise 'em and turn up their noses at 'em."

"They must be very silly people," I replied. "Some of the worst and most ignorant people I ever heard of live in cities; and some of the best and wisest of my friends live in the country. But I am in haste this morning; can you sell me the chickens?"

"I ain't in no ways distressed for money. My husband is a forehanded man—if he ain't larned—and he can afford to feed both me and the hens without sellin' either of us," was Mrs. Lamson's rude reply.

It was evidently the "larnin'" of my family that cut Mrs. Lamson's pride; and she had set us down as idlers who had nothing to do but to pet cats, dogs, and birds, and to read, and was thus expressing her disapprobation of such a life, rather than of me personally.

"I don't want the bother o' ketchin' chickens when he's away," she

continued—she always called Mr. Lamson "he"—"and I can use all the eggs I've got without much trouble. I'd like to know who told you I kept things to sell to private folks?" she asked with some sharpness.

"The storekeeper," I replied. He said everything you had was the very best of its kind; and that if I could only taste your butter, I'd think I never tasted butter before." I did not tell her what else he said about her.

I had now touched the spring that loosed Mrs. Lamson's tongue.

"Did Mr. Thompson say that?" she asked with a kindling interest in her dull eye.

"He did."

"Well, if I do say it that shouldn't I do know how to make butter—if I don't read books and play the pianny! Folks can live without music and readin, but they can't live without butter. My neighbors say to me, Miss Lamson, I wish you would teach us to make butter." But I tell 'em butter-makin' is born in folks,—like blue eyes and hair,—that ef you ain't a natral-born butter-maker, it ain't no use tryin'; better marry a shoemaker and not impose on a farmer! Why, to, the F——County Fair I took the prize; ef I hadn't I do believe I'd took my own life; it would 'a' been sich a down-come! Why a man that kep' public-house in Newport heard about my butter; and says he to Jim Lord o' this place, that was head waiter—

"Mrs. Lamson," I said, "I must bid you 'good afternoon,' as I must go somewhere else and look for chickens for to-morrow's dinner. Some one may be willing to do me a kindness, even if they do not care for the money." And I turned and left the yard.

"Mrs. Willard!" cried Mrs. Lamson, letting fall a shower of patchwork, and running out of the gate and waving the corner of her apron. "Do you want a favor—to be obleeged by a neighbor? Nobody shan't out do me there!"

"I want some chickens and eggs," I said, without looking back or stopping. "I have no doubt I can get them of Mrs. Denham."

"Well," she cried, still following me "Miss Denham sets hersen up for good, she belongs to the church and goes to all the night meetin's and sewin' societies and donations and noboddy knows what; but when it comes to the hard pan, she isn't no piouser than I be, for she asks a cent a quart more for milk of city folks than she does of the neighbors, and she weighs her chickens afore she draws 'em which I don't! She may obleege folks, but she gets well paid fort. If you want chickens as a favor, or eggs either, I'd as soon give 'em—most; but I do hate to be looked down on by grand folks."

By this time Mrs. Lamson had overtaken me, and laid her hand kindly on my shoulder.

I turned and looked at her in surprise. All the hard lines were gone from her sorrowful face, her eyes were alight with kindness, and cheeks all aglow with excitement.

"You come back, Mrs. Willard," she said gently, "and you shall have whatever you want that belongs to me."

I wanted the chickens and eggs, and dreaded a walk in the sun too much to show resentment, or to despise the relenting mood. So I turned back, went into the house, and became her guest for half an hour.

The chicken and egg question being settled, I thought I would settle Mrs. Lamson.

I had been told by the storekeeper that she had so much "dignity" that she was a perfect porcupine,—you couldn't get near her for the quills; that she acted like a termagant!

When I had been informed that "he" had only gone to mill, and would be back soon, and would pick the chickens and bring them to me, and had drunk a glass of rich milk,

and accepted a basket of pears, I said playfully:

"Now tell me, Mrs. Lamson, what I or any one belonging to me hasne do that you treated me as you did when I came! In the city we would call that a rude reception even for a beggar."

"Ah, so it would be for a beggar; no one ever saw me sit still when a beggar came in. But beggars come for favors, and a body can afford to be polite to them. But folks that set themselves up above me—well, the fact is, I've got a sight of dignity, and I've just got to keep it up! It's natral, and I can't help doin' it! I see I was mistaken in you—that you don't despise me, and I ask your pardon, and I hope you'll come here whenever you want a favor,—that you don't give money for, I mean."

"Well, that is a frank apology, and we will now be good neighbors," I said. If you need any favor you will always find me ready to grant it."

The greatest concession a person of Mrs. Lamson's "dignity" can make is to ask a favor; and this she now did most gracefully.

"There is a favor I would like to ask of you," she said hesitatingly.

"Well, it shall be granted. What is it?"

"I have thought for a good while, ever since you first came to your cottage, that I should like to read a book! I don't mean to say that we havnt any books, for we hev. He had 'The Young Man's Guide to Success,' and 'The Lives of the Presidents,' that belonged to his folks,—when he was married; and we've took three books, in numbers, mostly for the pictures; and then our representatives has presented my husband with five elegant great volumes of Congress reports—but I don't take to none of these myself. When I've read the 'Dairy and Garden' part of our agricultural paper, I hain't no more readin'. I would like to borrow a book, if you ain't afeard o' my spilin' the gilt on 'em. I'll cover it afore I read it."

"You shall have a dozen of my best which have no gilt," I said.

"Mercy! I shan't live long enough to read a dozen books," she cried, laughing at the idea. "But since so many larned folks has begun to come to our town in summer, I have felt as if should like to read a book, so if I should happen to meet any of 'em to a picnic or anywhere, I'd have something to converse about. Now if you will lend me a book, I will give you a pot of my butter for your company to-morrow!"

"You shall have all the books you want without butter," I said.

"No my dignity couldn't give in to that. I must give as well as take. Your husband and daughter must taste my butter! I do wish I had time to read a dozen books and be like you," she said, with a glance of admiration in her eye. I always thought afore to-day that larned folks was a sort of race by themselves, that didn't do nothin' but read—that never make bread nor take care of their families; that they have green Paddies to do all their domestic duties for 'em."

"Well, I assure you, you are mistaken there. The best wives and mothers are those who try to improve their own minds," I said.

"Where do they get the time? I don't see a spare minute from five in the mornin' till dark; and then I'm too tired to read."

"How long will it take you to make this quilt?" I asked.

She took the question as a compliment to the quilt, and replied, "Well by using every spare minute I can make such a one, have it quilted and bound and put away in six months. I've made over twenty—some of them of pieces not bigger than a silver quarter—since I've been married! she exclaimed triumphantly.

"You could have bought that number of bedspreads for the money these quilts have cost you, and have read

fifty valuable books in the time, and have made yourself a companion for intelligent persons." I said kindly.

"That work is a pleasant pastime, but the time you spend on it while you starve your immortal mind, is well-nigh wasted."

"You don't?" exclaimed Mrs. Lamson. "Well, I'm only thirty-seven; maybe there is time enough left for me to larn something yet."

"You are yet a young woman; and if you hadn't so much 'dignity,' I could put you in a way to larn a great deal in a very little time," I said, pitying her ignorance.

"Well my dignity lays mostly in not wantin' to be helped in a money way, or to be despised by folks not as myself"

She looked at me, as if to say, "that means you," but knowing the truth she suggested, and not mourning over it, it did not hurt my "dignity."

So I said, "All intelligent people honor those who desire to gain knowledge, and if you are one of them, I will help you all in my power."

She walked half-way home with me thanking me for my kindness, and apologizing for her own rudeness.

She became an obliging neighbor, and my efforts to interest her in literature and the outside world seemed to bring a new experience of happiness to her life.—*Youth's Companion.*

A Narrow Escape.

We extract the following from "Three Dews and a Crew," a story in the September *St. Nicholas*. A spring freshet of the Susquehanna River had shut up some children and their grandmother in a lofty stone tower, called "Drew's Folly." They had had a wearying day, and matters went on as follows:

"Caleb," said Dinah, suddenly, "there isn't a drop of water to make poor Grandma a cup of tea!"

Instantly, Caleb was overturning things in one corner to get at a water pail. When it was found, and a rope to make it fast to it, the four children went into "mother's room" and Caleb cautiously raised the heavy sash. In came the cold wind and the colder breath from the great cakes of ice that went surging past the stones of the house; for the river had broken up. The sight was appalling! One young head ventured out and another and another, until all had had a glance at the wild waste of the whirling waters that surrounded Drew's Folly on each and every side.

Wif burst into a flood of tears, and Roy said:

"I think we'd ought to be a-saying our prayers 'stead of getting supper to eat, only I am 'most awful hungry."

Wif's tears were not quenched, nor was Roy's little speech noticed, for Caleb had let the pail down into the boiling, tumbling surge that rushed by, not more than four feet below the window-ledge. As the pail touched water, an immense cake of ice struck it, and away went pail, rope and ice, although Caleb strove to hold on with such a desperate clutch that the rope cut into his palms as it was pulled through them.

"The water is rising just awful now," said Caleb, wringing his hands in pain.

"Anyhow, water we must have," decided Dinah; and whilst Caleb held his hands to endure the pain better, she went to search for another pail. Roy staid with Caleb, and Wif went to help Dinah.

"You shall have the tea soon, now, Grandma, dear," Dinah stopped to say, and then began a vigorous overturning of the utensils lying about the room.

It was raining no longer, and through a rift in the clouds the moon shone down just as Caleb put his head out, and looking up the river, saw a mighty tree coming down on the flood.

"It'll come against the house, right

up to this window," he cried, and his first impulse was to close the window. It was arrested by a sound that no tempest ever uttered a note of. It was a human cry, and it said:

"Help! Help!"

"Hold on! hold on!" yelled Caleb out into the rush and roar, and then with a flash of motion he seized the nearest thing to his hand and thrust it forth bending over the ledge to do so, at the very instant Dinah rushed to his side. With the quickness of thought, she fell upon her knees behind him and threw her arms about his body, while Wif, with a cry, seized one of his legs and held on with all his strength, and Roy tried his utmost—happily, without success—to let the sash down on his back, so determined was he not to lose him.

Down came the big tree, its branches struggling in vain in the grasp of the waters, and its mighty boughs shaken as no wind had ever smitten them. There clung for life to the tree, a despairing, helpless man,—despairing until he perceived that the current would dash the tree full against the house. The light of the moon gave to him a sight of the open window, and from it outstretched, awaiting his possible grasp, the friendly chair that Caleb had seized. It was a strong, old-fashioned, honestly wrought chair, that had been made by the original Caleb Drew. The tree came on; for an instant it ground against the masonry of the Folly, then a crash of glass in a sash below was heard as a limb went through it—a pause—and the tree broke loose and went on. But in that chance, that pause, that instant of delay, a hand grasped the chair, another clutched the stone ledge, and the man gained fast hold of the sill above.

Oh, that was a mement worth living for! Child-hands had helped to drag in an unknown man, and found, when he was in, that he was the father of six of those helping hands!

The joy of a moment like that moment will not get into words. It bursts the bonds of language, and utters itself by eyes and lips and arms.

All that I can tell you that really happened within the next few seconds, was, that a tall, fine-looking man, in drenched garments, stood, like one bewildered in a dream, with four children dancing, screaming, hugging and kissing him; that he was told that grandmother was all safe and well; that the old cow was in the tower-room, and the calf was in the closet, and mother's best bed was in the tower, and that if the water came above the floor they were all going to try together to lift grandma out of bed and carry her up there; that he was asked how he came to get into the river, and all about mother, where she was, and how she was going to get home, besides forty other questions.

Speak Short.

An aged minister said to a young brother, "Speak short. The brethren will tell you if you don't speak long enough." The counsel is good, good for speakers and good for hearers; good for writers and good for readers. Length without breadth and thickness is very poor recommendation in a sermon, a prayer, or a newspaper article. The power of condensation, abridgement, and elimination of useless matter is greatly to be coveted. When a man has five minutes in which to speak he will usually consume one or two of them in telling the people what he is going to say, or in informing them that he has "been thinking" of something which he proposes to relate. If men who have something to say would say it, if those who have had thoughts would speak them, and those who have something to write would write it, omitting prefaces, introductions, and useless and unmeaning remarks, much time and space would be saved with no loss to any one. But how hard it is to be brief. It takes gallons of sap to make a single pound of sugar, but the sweetness pays for condensing. A little word said and remembered is better than any amount of weary, casual talk, which men endure and gladly forget.—*The Christian.*