

## NATURE'S REPROOF.

"There hain't no summer comin'," said the grumbler in dismay. And he trudged through the woodlands where the leafless trees stood guard. Where the scene around him darkened and all Nature's grace was marred. By the blasts of cold midwinter that had sternly held their sway. But a sternly ruffled red-breast thrilled a happy little song. And a sparrow chirped with pleasure as he winged his way along.

"There hain't no summer comin'." Why, since now the sky is dark, Must the sun forever leave us just because it rests awhile? Can't the frowns of bleak December be replaced by Maytime's smile?

Why, the songsters are in training, and we'll soon hear from the lark. Buds are peeping out o'er hilllocks; trees are smiling through the rain. That will make them love the sunshine when it comes to them again.

"There hain't no summer comin'," but adown one storm-strewn dell Rumped a playful squirrel, happy in the knowledge of a day That was soon to bring its blessings and the violets of May.

While some stream in gurgling protest, as upon the moss it fell, Mingled music of the sunshine with the music of the rain. And roused up a sleeping flower that for months had lifeless lain.

—W. Livingston Larned.

## THE SILENCE OF SIMEON SAYLES.

BY J. L. HARBOUR.

"I wish to goodness, Simeon Sayles, that you would shut up and keep shut up!" said Myra Sayles in a weary tone and speaking as if the words were forced from her against her will.

"You do, hey?" replied her brother Simeon, sharply and irritably.

He had been scolding about some trifling matter for nearly half an hour, and his sister Myra had listened in patient silence. Now she spoke because he had said something peculiarly annoying, and when he had replied so sharply she said:

"Yes, I mean it, Simeon Sayles. I get so sick and tired of your eternal scolding and blaming that I just wish sometimes you'd shut your mouth and never open it again while you live."

"You do, hey?"

"Yes, I do."

There was a sullen silence in the room for three or four minutes; the wrinkles on Simeon's brow deepened, and his lips were pressed more and more tightly together. Suddenly he opened them with a snap and a defiant toss of his head.

"Very well, Myra Sayles, I will 'shut up,' and I'll stay 'shut up,' and you'll see how you like it."

"I'll have some peace, then," replied Myra, shortly. Yet she looked at her brother curiously.

The Sayleses were noted in the country roundabout for rigidly adhering to every resolution they made. The thought now came into Myra's mind, "Will he do it?" She had not meant him to take her remark literally. Simeon was as iron-willed as any of the family, and yet Myra felt that he could not keep such a vow long. It was necessary for him to talk. So she said:

"I guess you'll be gabbling away fast enough before night. There's no such good luck as your keeping still very long."

Simeon made no reply, but took his old straw hat from a nail behind the door and went out into the barnyard, walking very erect, but with little jerks, indicating that the Sayles temper was high in him.

"Now he'll go out to the barn and patch around out there a while and maybe patch all evening in the house and then talk a blue streak all day tomorrow to make up for the time he's lost keeping still. I declare, if the men-folks can't be the tryest!"

She stitched away steadily on the sheet she was turning until the clock struck 6, when she jumped up hastily.

"Mercy," she exclaimed, "I'd no idea it was so late! I hope to goodness the fire hasn't gone out. I must get the kettle on and supper ready. I did intend making some of the flannel cakes Simeon likes so much, to put him in good humor, but I don't believe I shall have time now."

Nevertheless, there was a plate of steaming hot "flannel cakes" and a bowl of maple syrup before Simeon's plate when he came in to supper half an hour later.

He ate the cakes in stubborn silence.

"Are you going to Seth Badger's after supper," Myra asked, "to see him about helping you cut that grass tomorrow?"

After waiting in vain for the answer, Myra said:

"I want to know if you do go, because I want to send Mrs. Badger a waist pattern of hers I borrowed last week."

No reply from Simeon. His sister gave her head an impatient toss, and they finished the meal in silence. When it was done Simeon went to a little table in a corner of the room, pulled out the drawer and took from it a scrap of blank paper and a stub of a lead pencil.

Myra took the supper dishes into the kitchen; when she came into the room again Simeon handed her the scrap of paper. On it was written:

"I'm a-going over to Badger's now."

Myra dropped the bit of paper on the floor and stared hard at her brother.

"Well, Simeon Sayles!" she said at last. "I call this carrying matters pretty far. Before I'd make myself so ridiculous, I'd—What you going to do when you get over to Badger's? You'll look smart writing out what you've got to say over there, now on 't you? You'll make yourself the laughing-stock of the country if you go

their lives on Hope, and their affection had not lessened by her absence. In the years since they had seen Hope's pretty face and heard her cheery voice they often talked of her.

Myra had always stood as a strong wall between Hope and harm or trouble of any kind, and this loving thoughtfulness had kept her from writing a word to her sister about their brother's strange silence.

"I wouldn't have Hope know it for anything," Myra had said; "it would worry the child so. And there's no danger of Simeon writing it. He'd be ashamed to."

During all the fall and through one whole long, wretched winter the iron-willed Simeon kept his resolve not to speak, and a decided shake of his head or a written "No" was his reply to Myra's often repeated question, "Don't you ever intend to speak again?"

One day in May a neighbor, coming from the town, brought Myra a letter that gave to her troubled heart the wildest thrill of joy it had known for many a day. Hope was coming home! She had written to say that she would arrive on Wednesday of the following week with her little girl of three years and that they would spend the entire summer in the old home.

Catching up her sunbonnet, Myra ran all the way to the distant field in which Simeon was at work, holding the letter out as she ran and calling out before she reached him:

"O Simeon! Simeon! A letter from Hope! She's coming home! She'll be here next week with her little Grace, that we've never seen! Only think of it—Hope's coming home!"

Simeon was plowing. He reined up his horses with a jerk and opened and shut his mouth three or four times; but no sound came from his lips. His face wore a half-wild, half-frightened look, and his hand trembled as he held it out for the letter.

"Simeon! Simeon!" cried Myra, with quivering voice and tearful eyes, "surely you'll have to speak now!"

He shook his head slowly and sadly as he sat down on the plow to read the letter. He handed it back in silence and turned away his head when he saw the tears streaming down Myra's cheeks, and he bit his lip until it almost bled when he heard her sob as she turned to go back to the house.

When he came to dinner he read the letter again, but he and Myra ate in silence.

Hope came a week from that day. Myra went to the railroad station three miles distant to meet her.

"It'll be better for me to meet her than for you, if you are bound and determined to keep up this nonsense while she's here," said Myra. "She doesn't know a thing about it; you may be sure I haven't written a word of it to the poor child, and I dread to tell her of it now. It's a shame, a burning shame, Simeon Sayles, for you to spoil Hope's first visit home just to carry out a silly vow that it was wicked for you ever to make in the first place. It's a piece of wickedness right straight through!"

A visible pallor had come into Simeon's face at the mention of Hope's little girl. No one knew how much and how tenderly this little girl whom he had never seen had been in his thoughts. He was fond of children, and no child in the world could be as dear to him as this little girl of Hope's. He and Myra had looked forward so eagerly to the time when Hope should bring her to them, and they read so proudly of all her infantile charms and accomplishments as set forth in Hope's letters!

He stole softly into the seldom-opened parlor when Myra had gone. Several photographs of Hope's little girl, taken at different stages of her infantile career, were in the album on the parlor table. Simeon took up this album and gazed at these photographs, one by one, with unhappy eyes.

He wandered round the house and yard until the time drew near for Myra's return with Hope and little Grace. Then he went down the road to meet them. He had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile when he sat down by the wayside to wait until they should drive around a turn in the road a hundred yards or more distant.

He had waited not more than five minutes when he heard the sound of wheels and voices around the curve in the road. He heard the sudden, sweet laugh of a child and was on his feet in an instant.

At that same instant a man on a bicycle dashed past him. Bicycles were still an almost unheard of thing in that part of the country. Simeon had never seen but three or four of them, and the appearance of this one whirling along at such speed startled him.

Its rider sent it flying on down the road, and it whirled around the curve, to the surprise of Miss Myra and to the terror of old Hector, the horse she was driving. The reins were lying loosely in Myra's hands, and before she could gather them up old Hector jumped aside, rearing and plunging, and the next instant he was racing madly down the road with the reins dragging the ground on either side of him, while Hope clung to little Grace and screamed.

"Whoa! Whoa, Hector!" cried Myra in a voice so awful with terror that it frightened old Hector the more.

"Whoa, Hector, whoa!"

This time old Hector pricked up his ears, for the voice that spoke was a

## DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

SUNDAY'S DISCOURSE BY THE NOTED DIVINE.

Subject: "Looking Backward"—It is Well to Review the Past and Arouse the Soul to Reminiscences of Dangers Escaped and Sorrows Suffered.

Text: "While I was musing, the fire burned."—Psalms xxxix, 3.

Here is David, the psalmist, with the forehead of his right hand against his temple and the door shut against the world, engaged in contemplation. And it would be well for us to take the same posture often, while we sit down in sweet solitude to contemplate.

In a small island off the coast of Nova Scotia I once passed a Sabbath in delightful solitude, for I had resolved that I would have one day of entire quiet before I entered upon autumnal work. I thought to have spent the day in laying out plans for Christian work, but instead of that it became a day of tender reminiscence. I reviewed my pastorate; I shook hands with an old departed friend, whom I shall greet again when the curtains of life are lifted. The days of my boyhood came back, and I was ten years of age, and I was eight, and I was five. There was but one home on the island, and yet from Sabbath daybreak, when the bird chant woke me, until the evening melted into the Bay of Fundy, from shore to shore there were ten thousand memories, and as groves were a-hum with voices that had long ago ceased.

Youth is apt too much to spend all its time in looking forward. Old age is apt too much to spend all its time in looking backward. People in middle age and on the apex look both ways. It would be well for us, I think, however, to spend more time in reminiscence. By the constitution of our nature we spend most of the time looking forward. And the vast majority of people live not so much in the present as in the future. I find that you mean to make a reputation, you mean to establish yourself, and the advantages that you expect to achieve absorb a great deal of your time. But I see no harm in this if it does not make you disinterested with the present or disqualify you for existing duties. It is a useful thing sometimes to look back, and to see how you have escaped, and how the sorrows we have suffered, and the trials and wanderings of our earthly pilgrimage, and to sum up our enjoyments. I mean, so far as God may help me, to stir up your memory of the past, so that in the review you may be encouraged and humbled and urged to pray.

Among the greatest advantages of your past life were an early home and its surroundings. The bad men of the day, for the most part, did their heated passions out of the boiling spring of an unhappy home. We are not surprised to find that Byron's heart was brought up in the streets when he heard his mother was abandoned and that she made sport of his infirmity and often called him "the lame brat." He who has vicious parents has to fight every inch of his way if he would maintain his integrity and at last reach the home of the good in heaven. Perhaps your early home was in a city. It may have been in Pennsylvania avenue, Washington, or Canal street, New York, or far up town. That old house in the city may have been demolished or blown into the air, and it seemed like sacrilege to you—for there was more meaning in that small house than there is in a granite mansion or a turreted cathedral. Looking back, you see it as though it were yesterday—the sitting room, where the father brought up in the lamplight, the mother at the evening stand, the brothers and sisters perhaps long ago gathered into the skies, then plotting mischief on the floor or under the table; your father with firm voice commanding a silence that lasted half a minute.

You may have in your windows now beautiful plants and flowers brought from across the seas, but not one of them stirs in your soul so much charm and memory as the old ivy and the yellow sunflower that stood sentinel along the garden walk and the forget-me-nots playing hide and seek mid the long grass. The father who used to come in unannounced from the field and sit down on the doorstep and wipe the sweat from his brow may have gone to his everlasting rest. The mother who used to sit at the door a little bent over, cap and spectacles on her face mellowing with the vicissitudes of many years, may have put down her gray head on the pillow in the valley, but forgive that home to you never will. Have you thanked God for it? Have you rehearsed all these blessed reminiscences? Oh, thank God for a Christian father! Thank God for a Christian mother! Thank God for an early Christian altar at which you were taught to kneel! Thank God for an early Christian home!

I bring to mind another passage in the history of your life. The day came when you set up your own household. The days passed along in quiet blessedness. You twain sat at the table morning and night and talked over your plans for the future. The most insignificant affair in your life became the subject of mutual consultation and advertisement. You were so happy you felt you never could be any happier. One day a dark cloud hovered over your dwelling, and it got darker and darker, but out of that cloud the shining messenger of God descended to incarnate an immortal spirit. Two little feet started on an eternal journey, and you were to lead them, a gem to flash in heaven's coronet, and you to polish it; eternal ages of light and darkness watching the starting out of a newly created creature. You rejoiced and you trembled at the responsibility that in your possession an immortal treasure was placed. You prayed and rejoiced and wept and wondered; you were earnest in supplication that you might lead it through life into the kingdom of God. There was a tremor in your earnestness. There was a double interest about that home. There was an additional interest why you should stay there and be faithful, and when in a few months your house was filled with the music of the child's laughter you were struck through with the fact that you had a stupendous mission.

Have you kept that vow? Have you neglected any of these duties? Is your home as much to you as it used to be? Have those anticipations been gratified? God help you in your solemn reminiscences!

Troubles of Their Own.

"You can't place any dependence on a woman's word," moodily remarked the young man who had been jilted. "Of course you don't believe that."

"Oh, yes I do," said the married man. "My wife has been threatening to leave me for ten years."—Indianapolis Journal.

soul if your kindness has been ill requited! God have mercy on the parent on the wrinkles of whose face is written the story of a child's sin! God have mercy on the mother who, in addition to her other pains, has the pang of a child's iniquity! Oh, there are many a many sad sounds in this sad world, but the saddest sound that is ever heard is the breaking of a mother's heart!

I find another point in your life history. You found one day you were in the wrong road. You could not sleep, and your heart was just one word that seemed to sob through your banking house, or through your office, or your shop, or your bedroom, and that word was "eternity." You said, "I'm not ready for it. Oh, God, have mercy!" The Lord heard. Peace came to your heart. In the breath of the hill and in the waterfalls dash you heard the voice of God's love. The clouds and the trees hailed you with gladness. You came into the house of God. You remember how your hand trembled as you took up the cup of the communion. You remember the old minister who consecrated it, and you remember the church officials who carried it through the aisle. You remember the old people who at the close of the service took your hand in theirs in congratulating sympathy, as much as to say, "Welcome home, you lost prodigal!" And, though those hands be all withered away, that communion Sabbath is resurrected to-day.

But I must not spend any more of my time in going over the advantages of your life. I just put them in your memory, and I call them up in your memory with one loud harvest song, such as the raspers sing. Praise the Lord, ye blood bought immortals on earth! Praise the Lord, ye crowned spirits of heaven!

But some of you have not always had a smooth life. Some of you are now in the shadow. Others had their troubles years ago; you are a mere wreck of what you once were. I must gather up the sorrows of your past life, but how shall I do it? You say that it is impossible, as you have had so many sorrows in your past life. Then I will just take two—the first trouble and the last trouble. As when you are walking along the street, and there has been music in the distance, you unconsciously find yourselves keeping step to the music, so when you are in your life you are full of joy and hilarity; with the bright, clear air you made the boat skip. You went on, and life grew brighter, until, after awhile, suddenly a voice from heaven said, "Halt!" and quick as the sunshine you halted, you were in a great sorrow, your first sorrow. You had no idea that the flush on your child's cheek was an unhealthy flush. You said it cannot be anything serious. Death in slippers feet walked around the cradle. You did not hear the tread, but the angel's tread flashed on you. You walked the floor. Oh, if you could, with your strong, stout hand, have wrenched that child from the destroyer! You went to your room and you said, "God, save my child! God, save my child!" The world seemed going out in darkness. You said, "I can't bear it. I can't bear it." You felt as if you could not put the long lashes over the bright eyes, never to see them again sparkle. If you could have taken that little one in your arms, and with it leaped the grave, how gladly you would have done it. If you could let your property go, your houses go, how gladly you would have let them depart if you could only have kept that one treasure!

But one day there came up a "chill blast" that swept through the bedroom, and instantly all the lights went out, and there was darkness—thick, murky, impenetrable, shuddering darkness. But God did not leave you there. Mercy spoke. As you took up the bitter cup to put it to your lips, God said, "Let it pass," and forthwith, by the hand of an angel, an angel which you put into your hands. It was the cup of God's consolation. And as you have sometimes lifted the head of a wounded soldier and poured wine into his lips, so God puts His left arm under your head and with His right hand He pours His consolation into the wine of His comfort and His consolation, and you looked at the empty cradle and looked at your broken heart, and you said, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good to Thee." Ah, it was your first trouble. How did you get over it? God confronted you. You have been a better man ever since. You have been a better woman ever since. In the jar of the closing gate of the sepulcher you heard the clanking of the opening gate of Heaven, and you were in the drawing heavenward. You have been spiritually better ever since that night when the little one for the last time put its arms around your neck and said: "Good night, papa! Good night, mamma! Meet me in Heaven!"

Perhaps your last sorrow was a financial embarrassment. I congratulate some of you on your lucrative profession or occupation, on ornate apparel, on a commodious residence—everything you put your hands on seeming to turn to gold. But there are others of you who are like the ship of which Paul sailed where two seas met, and you are broken by the violence of the waves. By an unadvised indorsement, or by a conjunction of unforeseen events, or by a fire or storm, or a senseless panic, you have been brought to the point where you once dispensed great charities now you have hard work to win your daily bread. Have you forgotten to thank God for your days of prosperity, and that through your trials some of you have made investments which will continue to pay you? Has this world has exploded, and the silver and gold are molten in the fires of a burning world? Have you, amid all your losses and discouragements, forgot that there was bread on your table this morning, and that there shall be a shower for you, and that the storm, and there is air over your eyes, and blood for your heart, and light for your eye, and a glad and glorious and triumphant religion for your soul?

Perhaps your last trouble was a bereavement. That heart which in childhood was your refuge, the heart of an angel, has been a source of the quickest sympathy ever since, has suddenly become silent forever. And now sometimes, whenever in sudden annoyance and without deliberation you say, "I will go and tell mother," the thought flashes on you, "I have no mother." Or the father, with voice less tender, but with heart as loving, watchful of all your ways, exultant over your success without saying much, although the old people do talk it over by themselves, his trembling hand on that staff which you now keep as a family relic, his memory embalmed in grateful hearts—is taken away forever. Or there was your companion in life, sharer of your joys and sorrows, taken, leaving the heart an old ruin, where the ill winds blow over a wide wilderness of desolation, the sands of desert driving across the place which once bloomed like the garden of God. And Abraham mourns for Sarah at the cave of Machpelah. As you were moving along your path in life, suddenly, right before you, was an open grave. The people looked down, and they saw it was only a few feet deep and a few feet wide, but to you it was a cavern down which went all your hopes and all your expectations. But cheer up in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Comforter.

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