

The Home Circle.

BEAUTIFUL HANDS.

Such beautiful, beautiful hands!
They're neither white nor small,
And yet, I know, would scarcely think
That they were fair at all.
I've looked on hands whose form and hue
A sculptor's dream might be,
Yet are these aged, wrinkled hands
Most beautiful to me.

Such beautiful, beautiful hands!
Though heart were weary and sad,
These patient hands kept toiling on
That children might be glad.
I almost weep, as looking back
To childhood's distant day,
I think how these hands rested not,
When mine were at their play.

But oh! beyond this shadow land—
Where all is bright and fair.
I know full well those dear old hands
Will palms of victory bear;
Where crystal streams, through endless time
Flow over golden sands,
And where the old grow young again,
I'll clasp my mother's hands.

THE VANISHED YEARS.

There are lonely hours when there comes no more

A low, sweet voice from that echoes shore.
There are hearts grown sad and eyes dimmed
with tears

For memories that come with the vanished years.

Those beautiful years that are swept away,
When life seemed one long, fair summer day—
No broken vows, no sundered ties,
No thought of care 'neath the blue, blue skies.

The daisies are blooming sweetly now
Over the pearl of a saintly brow;
And myrtle and ivy are growing green
Over the graves where our loved are lain.

'Tis only in dreams we now recall
A low, sweet voice we have heard in the hall—
Only memory, dear and sweet,
Can picture the patter of little feet.

Though the ivy is green over those we love,
And birds sweetly sing in the branches above;
Fond memories come through our blinding tears
Of faces we loved in the vanished years.

When our tired feet the dark valley have
crossed,
And the vanished years give up our lost—
Beyond the River that washes the strand,
On the sliding shores of that better land.

No sorrow shall dim our spirits light,
No broken voices shall say "good-night."
We shall ask for no voice from that far-away
shore,

For the vanished years will be ours evermore.

And the little feet that have pattered here,
And the merry voices that rang with cheer,
Shall have new charms to their echoes given
That will garden our hearts in the courts
of Heaven.

WHAT IS LIFE?

Our life is a strange combination of the mortal and immortal, physical and mental existence. The mystic link connecting the soul and body, what mortal mind can comprehend? The spring that moves to action—that invisible monitor which prompts us to think, act and feel, who can understand? Without this silent though powerful agent, the frail, delicately organized physical system dies, and is utterly powerless. This life of ours is indeed a problem; even the most learned, and those who have ever been searching out its mystic connections, cannot comprehend its awful significance.

The physical system is indeed wonderful; the circulation of the blood, (the discovery of which theory was considered one of the greatest advancements of the age) respiration, uniting the vital gas, oxygen, with the blood; the nervous system transmitting sensations to and from the brain; the features of the face, beautiful in all their graceful curves and outlines, besides expressing the emotions of the soul within, all are alike wonderful. How beautiful the wise design which formed the countenance to be the medium by which the soul communicates with the outer world?

How varied, also, are the circumstances and conditions of existence! The relations we sustain to others, the ties of friendship and family, and our influence on others. Circumstances cause life to assume varied aspects. Sunshine and shadow trace their impress on the mind, and give us either weal or woe. Step by step advancing, the path diverges, bringing events entirely dissimilar from those preceding. Experience teaches us to anticipate events, and meet them with courage; but, nevertheless, the more one learns by experience, the less their self-sufficiency.

Who can tell us what life really is? Whose experience has been so vast as to determine all the secret emotions which thrill the soul? We may not know our own heart as friend perfectly, for looked in his bosom we live some sweet, and dream unrealized, some hope of his life destroyed which made him assume another phase to him. Ask the man whose white hair tells of the frost, and storm, which has destroyed the verdure of summer's bloom,

stricken its thrifty growth, and blasted its fairest flowers, if he clings to life.

"Ah, life has grown weary to me, and full of sorrow, and fain would I seek some milder clime!" he cries.

Ask the man in the fullness and strength of manhood, if he loves life.

"The busy world is before me; its surging crowd around; I must work, yes, toil! Who will gain for me those honors and attainments yet above me? I must toil up the rugged hill, to reach a station where men shall look up to me, and do me honor. My ambition and hopes are already at the eve of their fruition."

The youth with merry laugh and cheery smile, cries,—

"Life is sweet. What if some find it brings sorrow? Not so for me! Sunshine shall flood my pathway, and every pleasure earth can procure shall be mine."

To live is a privilege few can estimate. To live for a purpose, making others happy, improving our own opportunities by cultivating our good desires, refining and strengthening the intellect, is noble. Live nobly, as befits immortal spirits which have an inheritance of eternal life—which shall be witnesses of the roll of ages, and the mighty revolutions of the universe. Can one's life be too well employed with this in view? What account shall we render to Him who gave his life that we might live? We will accept the gift with thanksgiving, and in brightness of faith trust that God, will open to his beloved a far greater eternal weight of glory in his upper kingdom.

A RUSSIAN MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

The bride and bridegroom hold a lighted taper in their hands in front of a small altar placed in the center of the church. Rings were placed on their fingers, and their hands being joined, they were led three times around the altar. Two highly ornamented gilt crowns were placed on their heads and held over by the groomsman during part of the services. They drank wine out of a cup three times, and kissing one another, the ceremony was finished. The married couple then made a tour of the church, crossing themselves at and saluting each saintly icon on the way. Weddings generally take place toward evening, so that immediately after the ceremony, dinner commences at the house of the bride's father. At a marriage feast lighted candles are placed in every position and corner possible. No other wine but champagne should be drunk, and the quantity consumed of this beverage is remarkable. The dinner is followed by a ball, and the feasting is usually kept up for twenty-four hours. The custom of honeymooning does not exist in Russia. The married couple spend the first few days of their wedded life with the bride's father. After the marriage the bride and bridegroom must call upon every one of their relations, friends, and acquaintances, and after this ceremony is finished they sink back to their ordinary life.

A QUEER FISH.

The fish of paradise is one of the most peculiar of Chinese fresh-water fish. It is small in size, a pale gray in color, and at first sight having little about it to attract attention. As soon as the animal becomes excited, however, the long fins on the back and belly straighten out and assume a rich purple hue tinted with green; the long and fork-shaped tail spreads into a kind of fan, and the stripes upon the sides of the fish become yellow, red, and blue, constantly changing in color. The scales seem to become opalescent, and reflect the light with the greatest brilliancy, while the eyes appear to be illuminated with a bluish green fire. The habits of the animal are as odd as its appearance. The males take charge of the young and build the nest. The latter is simply a clot of foam floating upon the water, and is made by the fish rising to the surface and alternately absorbing and expelling air until a cluster of fine bubbles, hardly three-fourths of an inch square, is formed. The female then deposits her eggs, which are at once seized upon by the male, who carries them in his mouth to the nest. Then he watches their incubation, carefully guarding and distributing them with wonderful sagacity evenly throughout the mass of foam. When they clot together, he pushes them apart with his nose, and, besides, keeps up a continual manufacture of bubbles until the eggs are lifted up above the water and rest only upon their soft couch. As soon as the embryos appear, his care is doubled. He watches that none escape; and in case some become separated, he chases them, catches them in his mouth, and replaces them carefully in the nest. If one becomes injured, he removes it from the others, and gives it a separate air bubble to itself, and apparently nurses it until it regains strength.

TAKE HEED.

No matter how intimate you may be with the friend with whom you have business transactions, put your agreements in writing. How many misunderstandings arise from the loose way in which business matters are talked over, and when each party puts his own construction, the matter is dismissed by each party with the words "All right, all right." Frequently it turns out all wrong, and becomes a question for the lawyers and the courts. More than three-fourths of the litigation of the country would be saved if peo-

ple would only put their agreements in writing, and sign their names to it. Each word in our language has its peculiar meaning, and memory may, by the change in a sentence convey an entirely different from that intended. When once reduced to writing, ideas are fixed, and expensive lawsuits are avoided.

HOME.

When the summer day of youth is slowly wasting away into the nightfall of age, and the shadows of past years grow deeper and deeper as life wears to its close, it is pleasant to look back, through the vista of time, upon the sorrows and felicities of earlier years. Then what calm delights, what ineffable joys, are entered in the word "home." Friends are gathered around our fires, and many hearts rejoice with us; then, also, shall we feel that the rough places of our wayfaring have been worn and smoothed away in the twilight of life, while the sunny spots which we have passed through grow brighter and more beautiful to memory's eyes. Happy are they whose intercourse with the world has not changed the tone of their holier feelings, nor broken those musical chords of the heart whose vibrations are so melodious, so tender, and touching in the evening of age.

As the current of time winds slowly along, washing away the sands of life, like the stream that steals away the soil from the sapling on its banks, we look with a melancholy joy at the decay of things around us. To see the trees under whose shade we sat in our earlier years, and upon whose limbs we carved our names in the light-hearted gaiety of boyhood, if these frail memorials of our existence would long survive us,—to see these withering away like ourselves with the infirmities of age, excites within us mournful, but pleasant feelings for the past, and prophetic ones for the future. The thoughts occasioned by these frail and perishing records of our younger years, when the friends who are now lingering like ourselves upon the brink of the grave, or have long been asleep in its quiet bosom, were around us buoyant with the gaiety of youthful spirits,—are like the dark clouds when the storm is gone, tinged by the farewell rays of the setting sun.

"BOYS WILL BE BOYS."

Never lose heart or stop praying because your boys are a little wild. While you sadly call to mind the things they have forgotten, you are ignorant of the things they remember. It is the fashion for boys to appear indifferent to the counsels of parents. They have an idea that it is rather the manly and handsome thing to take good advice in a dogged sort of way, just as they take medicine, and a very brave thing to dare your threat. All this is written in the code of boyhood. We can't quite say with Emerson, that it is the bad boy who makes the good man; and yet we have a great deal of sympathy with that overflowing spirit of youth which is sometimes a little reckless, and which very frequently leads into mischief.

Just sit down, if you have such a son, and recall your own early days. It may be difficult for you, just now, when you are in the middle of life, to see the fun which the boy finds in what appear to you to be utterly foolish, or perhaps wantonly evil; but if you will turn to the early chapters of your own biography, you will find yourself stopping up the spouts of the old country house, just to see the rain pour over like a waterfall, and you will recall the fun of the old gentleman's embarrassment, as he rushed out into the rain, bare-headed, to find the cause of the trouble, and thereby got an attack of the rheumatism, which laid him up for a couple of weeks. Well, your boy is going through the same experience, and, by-and-by, he will regard it as you do now, as an unutterably foolish thing, and wonder where in the world the fun was. The truth is, that all these pranks are as necessary to boyhood as the measles. They are the result of natural animal spirits, which can no more be repressed, than can the waters which come bubbling up out of the sand.

Don't stop praying, and praying hopefully, for your children at such times. By keeping close to the boy's heart, and trying to appreciate his side of the matter as well as your own you will keep control of him.

CATS AND RATS.

Cats are very clever in the acts of opening latches when it suits their purpose. A family in one of the northern outskirts of London were, a good deal annoyed with the frequent robbery of their larder, a small out-house behind their dwelling. Legs of mutton and other articles were devoured or carried off, and no one could tell how. The theft was a mystery. One of the servants determined to discover the delinquent, and accordingly watched, and one night found that the thieves were a set of cats belonging to the neighborhood.

The larder had a latch which had to be pressed down in opening the door. No cat could properly press it down by springing from the ground. There was, however, an adjoining wall, from which cats might leap, and risk the depression of the latch as they successively passed. That is what they did. They leaped from the wall one after the other, each trying to depress the latch as it passed, until one cat, more fortunate than the others, made the needful depression with its paw. The door im-

mediately, was opened, and the leg of mutton, which had been the object of siege, was secured, and eaten, all but the bones. Was there not much sagacious planning in this piece of robbery by cats? We think there was—almost as much as we see demonstrated in some of the meaner departments of the human species. The incident took place lately.

Many instances have been recorded of the display of intelligence by rats, to which we beg leave to add the following:

A farmer's wife in the west of Scotland, remarked that the cream on the surface of the milk in her dairy was often interfered with. At first she suspected that some of her children had taken the unwarrantable liberty of dipping pieces of bread in it, but she could find nothing to confirm this suspicion; and by and by she noticed strange little streaks of cream on the edges of the milk cans, as if a string had been dipped in and drawn out, so as to leave a mark. At last she discovered the secret. The cream was stolen by rats, which got upon the edges of the earthenware basins holding the milk, and not being able to reach down to it, a depth of seven inches, not daring to attempt to go down, as they could never have climbed up the smooth surface again, dipped in the tips of their long tails, drew them up loaded with the rich cream, and licked them. An arrangement of the basins, so that the rats could not get upon the edges of them, put an end to all further depredations of this kind. There was surely something more than instinct in this case in the procedure of the rats.

We have something still to tell regarding the skill of rats. A family in a country house in Hertfordshire, had a fancy for rearing ducks, but could not do so on account of rats, which systematically got hold of and carried away the young ducklings, even from close to their mother. With a view to circumvent the rats, the maternal duck and her young were housed for the night under a coop, which admitted of no opening for the fugitive intruders. The rats were not to be so easily cheated of their prey. On discovering that the mother duck and her family were closely shrouded from intrusion, they devised a pretty plan of engineering, which was eminently successful. In the course of a single night they excavated a tunnel, going below the outer edge of the coop to its interior, and thence very neatly, without producing any alarm, stole every duckling from under the guardianship of the mother.

Two rats belonging to the same colony performed a feat quite as ingenious. A trap which was baited for their capture was habitually plundered without securing a single rat. They had evidently invented some plan for safely stealing away the bait, and what the plan was could only be learned by setting a watch on the trap. We shall explain how the thing was effected. The trap was of the kind which is sometimes employed for catching mice. It was a box with a sliding door which was sustained by a mechanism connected with the bait. On the bait being nibbled at, the door descends and makes the mouse a prisoner.

The two rats saw through the device and resorted to the very simple but effectual method to take away the bait, which was a piece of toasted cheese, and yet escape punishment; one of them placed itself under the door, so that it might fall on its back, while the other crept in and successfully carried off the morsel of cheese. The first rat then drew itself from under the door and joined his companion. This demonstration of rat intelligence, like the preceding incident, is of recent occurrence.

CHEERFULNESS.

Men seldom give pleasure when they are not pleased themselves; it is necessary, therefore, to cultivate an habitual alacrity and cheerfulness, that in whatever state we may be placed by nature—whether we are appointed to confer or receive benefits, to implore or afford protection—we may secure the love of those with whom we may have dealings. For, though it is generally imagined that he who grants favors may spare any attention to his behavior, and that usefulness will always procure friends, yet it has been found that there is an art of granting requests—an art very difficult of attainment.

RISING IN THE WORLD.

You should bear constantly in mind that nine-tenths of us are, from the very nature and necessities of the world, born to gain our livelihood by the sweat of our brow. What reason have we then to presume that our children are not to do the same? If they be, as now and then they will be, endowed with extraordinary powers of mind, those powers may have an opportunity of developing themselves; and if they never have that opportunity, the harm is not very great to us or to them. Nor does it hence follow, that the descendants of laborers are always to be laborers. The path upward is steep and long, to be sure. Industry, care, skill, excellence, in the present parent, lay the foundation of a rise, under more favorable circumstances, for the children. The children of these take another rise, and by and by the descendants of the present laborers become gentlemen. This is the natural progress. It is by attempting to reach the top by a single leap that so much misery is produced in the world, and the propensity to make such attempt has been

cherished and encouraged by the strange projects that we have witnessed of late years, for making the laborers virtuous and happy by giving them what is called education.

The education which I speak of consists of bringing children up to labor with steadiness, with care, and with skill—to show them how to do as many useful things as possible—to teach them to do them all the best manner—to set them an example in industry, sobriety, cleanliness and neatness—to make all these habitual to them, so that they never shall be liable to fall into the contrary—to let them always see a good living proceeding from labor, and thus to remove from the temptation to get at the goods of others by violent or fraudulent means.

HUMOROUS.

THE MEANEST MAN.

It turns out, after all, that the meanest man is not the man we referred to the other day, who split up his wife's tombstone. Burrows is even meaner than this. Burrows was an inveterate tobacco chewer; but as his wife detested the practice, and made home tempestuous and stormy for him when he indulged in the habit there, he always chewed when away during the day and declared to his wife that he had stopped permanently. But one evening on entering the front door, and dragging out his handkerchief, he accidentally pulled out his paper of tobacco, and without noticing it left it lying on the floor. When Burrows sat down to his tea, his wife walked in with the tobacco in her hand, and looking Burrows firmly in the eye, said: "Do you know who that belongs to?" With great presence of mind Burrows turned scowling to his eldest boy and said with a severe voice: "Immortal Mars. Is it possible that you have begun to chew tobacco, you young reprobate? Where'd you get that nasty stuff? What do mean by such conduct, you young villain? Haven't I told you often enough to let tobacco alone? Come here to me, or I'll tear the jacket off of you." And as he spoke the stern father made a grab at the boy and dragged him out in the entry, where he chastised him with a cane. Then Burrows threw the tobacco over the fence, where he went out and got it in the morning and enjoyed it during the day. "Merciful Moses," he exclaimed when he told us about it, "what would I have done if my children had all been girls? It makes the old father's heart glad when he feels that he has a boy he can depend on in such emergencies."—*Mac Adeler.*

AN EXPENSIVE JOKE.

A man who plays practical jokes upon his wife deserves to be punished, and Slattery of Muncy was punished. His wife has a dread of cats, and before retiring at night she always looks carefully under the bed to see that no stray puss, and no man on robbery intent, are concealed there. A few nights ago, after Mr. and Mrs. Slattery had retired, Slattery who had been learning ventriloquism, thought he would amuse himself, and scare his wife by gently yawning and making the sound come from under the bed. Mrs. Slattery instantly sat up and exclaimed,

Josiah, I do believe there is a cat in this room."

"Oh, nonsense," grunted Slattery; and then he made the sound again.

"I tell you, Josiah," exclaimed Mrs. S., "I hear a cat under this bed. I wish you'd get up and drive it away."

"Oh, go to sleep, Matilda," said Slattery. "I don't hear anything. There's no cat about."

Then Josiah with his mouth beneath the covers, uttered a louder screech than before.

"Well, if you won't clear that cat out, you brute, I will," said Mrs. S.

So she reached over, picked up Josiah's boots, and put them on in bed in order to protect her feet and ankles from the infuriated animal. Then she took Slattery's cane and stooped down to sweep it around beneath the bed. Just as she did so, Josiah emitted a fearful yell, which might come from a cat in the last paroxysm of hydrophobia. This startled Mrs. Slattery that she sprang backward, and in so doing she stumbled against the baby's cradle, which overturned, and she went head foremost against the twenty-five dollar looking-glass on the bureau, while the cane flew out of her hand and lighted with considerable force on Slattery's head.

The screams of Mrs. Slattery aroused all the neighborhood and even brought out the department, so that by the time the baby was rescued from the wreck and the broken glass picked up, two engines had streams playing upon the house, and the front had been burst open by the police; and the firemen were engaged in dragging a wet hose over the entry carpet and up the front stairs just as Slattery came down to explain things. That feline ventriloquism cost him just ninety dollars for carpets and looking glasses and a contusion on the head, which the people of Muncy believe to this hour that he received in a pugilistic encounter with his wife.

AMERICAN HUMOR.

The American humor partakes slightly of the Spanish character and extravagance, but it is nevertheless, the growth of the soil. The vastness of the country, which has said to be bounded on the east by the Atlantic ocean, on the north by the Aurora Borealis, on the west