



## The Family Circle.

### A BLESSING FOR THE BOYS.

"The angel which redeemed me from all evil bless the lads."—JACOB.

The colors of the eventide were in the western skies,

And the darkness of the night of death was in the patriarch's eyes;

The long day's work was finished now, and the gloaming hour was near,

And his spirit's eyes already saw the lights of Heaven appear.

One last, long backward look he gave over departed years,

He must have seen some scenes of yore through mist of sorrow's tears;

Some deeds were done for which, even now, he could have cried "Forgive!"

As he thought of stains upon the life God bade him purely live.

But God is full of mercy; and though sin might make him sad,

The patriarch thought upon His love till his heart was greatly glad;

The Lord had led him all the way, and given him joy for woe.

And bread and love in famine days, that he His power might know.

And then, the while he mused on this, friends came around the bed,

And the old man heard his son's loved voice, and his soul was comforted.

And two bright boys drew gravely near and saw the withered face,

And understood, with wondering awe, that Death was in the place.

God's servant raised his dying eyes, filled with a strange sweet bliss,

And took the children in his arms, as they bent to take his kiss;

And then with overflowing heart, he prayed "My Father, God,

The angel which redeemed me when through evil ways I trod,

"Oh, bless the lads, and let them grow and be a multitude,

And show them evermore Thy love and always do them good."

Then soon his dying words were o'er and his solemn blessing given,

And the old man passed away from earth to the promised land in Heaven.

But still his prayer goes daily forth, O Father, bless the boys;

Their way is yet untrodden, and untried life's griefs and joys;

Their future fight is yet to win; their glory yet to tell;

Oh, bless them, and they shall be blessed, and own that all is well.

—*Marianne Farningham, in Christian World.*

### QUESTIONABLE BOOKS.

My brother John's eldest boy, grown now almost a young man, has a very cultivated taste in literary matters, and likes to dip into almost all sorts of books. The other day I saw in his hands a volume, one of a number by the same author, written by a woman—I am glad to say not an American woman—under a *nom de plume*, and grown familiar to a certain circle of readers. I will not give the curious title which the authoress has assumed, for I do not care to aid in the circulation of her wares. I have no familiarity with her books, but I have sufficient knowledge of them to say that they come perhaps as near as possible to the limits where the immoral passes over into the obscene. They are read, and, by what peculiarity of taste I know not, admired by numerous readers, some of them among our cultivated people.

My nephew, Sam, had been reading the book, and as we sat alone we had a little talk over the matter somewhat after this fashion:

"Sam," I said, "have you read more than one of these books by —?"

"Yes," he replied, "I have read several of them."

"Well, what do you think of them? Do you admire them?"

"I do not know that I would like to say I admire them, but they have a good deal of interest, and have some curious developments of character in them. Everybody talks about them."

"What do you think of the style of morality which they picture? Is it of the most beautiful character?"

"No," he replied, smiling curiously, "I should not commend her books precisely for

their moral teachings. They would not make good pulpit readings."

"Are these books—and you know them a great deal better than I do, for you have read them and I have not—not positively immoral? Do they not delineate characters and detail incidents which are positively wicked? Would you like your sister or your mother to associate with such people as even the heroes and heroines of the book you have in your hand?"

"No, I cannot say that I would. But there are a good many people who are pictured in fiction that we would not like to have in our families."

"That is very true. There are, as you say, such characters here, but how are they delineated and exhibited? Are they made to seem repulsive? or is there a sort of halo thrown round them, so that in spite of your better convictions you half admire them?"

"Yes, I suppose you are more than half right in that; one does somehow feel a personal interest, if not admiration for them as he follows their fortunes; but I do not see any particular harm in that."

"There is the same harm and danger of harm in it as there would be in a personal acquaintance and intimate contact with just such people in actual life. Indeed you come, in some respects, in closer contact with them in the book than you would in real life. You are let into their secret thoughts and purposes, and hold a sort of communion with them that you would not be likely to have were they real flesh and blood. Just in proportion as they are powerfully delineated, just in that proportion are they brought in immediate contact with you. Now can that be anything but harmful, when they are bad as you know them to be? With such people you would be ashamed to be found, least of all to be thought to have them as confident companions."

"I had not thought of it in that light," he replied.

"Yet," I added, "it is a true light in which to view the matter. If the delineation of immorality is such as to compel us to despise and revolt from it so far the picture is or may be useful; but whenever it makes us smile, have a half admiration, or induces us to invent or follow plausible excuses for sin, then it can only be evil. But there is one thing more, and perhaps more important about this matter that I wanted to speak of. Did you see Lucy, and after her Harry, looking over this book? I am glad that you had occasion to take it out of their hands, as you said, to take it back to the library."

"I was going to take it back, but I confess that I partly made that an excuse to get it away from them."

"Why did you want to get it away?"

"Because I did not think it was just the book for them to read. They are young, you know."

"That was right and thoughtful, but would it not have been better had they never seen or known of the book at all? How do you know that they did not happen to light, in the glances they took of the volume, on just the most objectionable part of the story, and that the few paragraphs that they read did not awaken a desire to read the whole?"

"It may have been so," he said, "although I should be sorry if it were."

"But," I replied, "there is danger in the mere presence of such books. Although many, so called, literary people read them, yet you and I know that they are bad and not fit for our homes. I confess that the principal reason I had for having this conversation with you was this. Such books ought not to be brought into the house where young people are. Even if they do you no harm, have you any right to endanger the purity of thought and feeling of your brothers and sisters? Your father and mother, as you well know, labor and pray that their sons and daughters may grow up pure and good. Is it right for you to run even the risk of hindering or making fruitless their labor and their prayers? Yes—the entrance, through you, into the house of one such book may do an injury that years of care and parental watchfulness have vainly tried to prevent, and which nothing can undo. I am sure that your heart recoils from any such work."

"I thank you, uncle, for speaking to me about it. It was thoughtless in me. I do not think I will ever offend in this way again."

I know Sam's nobility and good sense so well that I am sure he will not ever give me occasion to have a similar talk with him.—*Uncle William, in Christian Weekly.*

### A YOUNG IRISHMAN.

BY MRS. LUCY E. SANFORD.

My Lord's young gardener looked on the even hedges, clear walks, delicate borders, trained vines and rare exotics, and was satisfied with his work, satisfied with his skill. He turned to his own cabin; and his bright-eyed little boy and his toddling wee one were watching to meet him, and the young mother had the simple supper on the neat deal table. But the very love that

filled his home was to him the spirit of unrest. For these boys Ireland had no future; her lands could never be their lands; from her schools the stern need to toil would shut them out; but across the blue sea lay a land which offered every man just as much education, position, wealth and honor as he would fit himself to take. Yet he loved his own green island, and it was hard to leave it for a land unknown and a life untried.

But love for his boys conquered love of place, and he came to the New World, bringing the good wife, the little boys, habits of industry and sobriety, and an absolute devotion to the Roman Catholic Church. He learned a trade, became a skilled workman, and in years made for himself a nice home, with fine grounds and rare flowers, and to his home circle another son and a daughter had been added.

This youngest son was warm-hearted, generous, impulsive, sarcastic, and a sturdy Romanist, with a most bitter contempt for these sects of yesterday. It was his delight to discuss with Protestants, and when they were silent he thought they were silenced, and exulted over his own strength and their weakness.

An infidel, who enjoyed his attacks on Protestants, asked him to read Paine's "Age of Reason." He read it with keen relish, accepted its logic and conclusions as unanswerable, and at once bought a Bible—that book which Paine had shown to be so puerile,—sure that the claim that it was too sacred to be read, was but a veil to hide its weakness and to give the Church power. He commenced, in a spirit of contempt, to search for its absurdities and contradictions.

That story of Christ—so touching, so simple, so pure, and so sweet—spoke to his heart and his soul, roused his intellect, and he exclaimed, with Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

There was a debating club in the village, and, after the discussion, a speech was always called for. He rose and spoke of Christ. Catholics and Unitarians united at once in a vote to expel him for having violated the design of the club. He went home sad, but here for him was naught but remonstrance. And on the morrow the priest came, coaxed, flattered, threatened, and then went to those parents, who believed he had power to forgive sin or shut up heaven, and to them he threatened purgatorial pains for ages because they had held the reins so loosely that their son had turned into a forbidden path.

All their affection for their child, all their fears for him and for themselves, all their superstitious faith, were aroused, and no means left untried to win or drive him back to the bosom of the holy mother Church; and, when all proved vain, the priest anathematized and the parents disowned him.

In one place he knew he should find sympathy and encouragement, and to the prayer meeting he went and told them the "old, old story." That Church was sleeping calmly and did not care to be awakened by this young Roman Catholic, and when he left the house not one took him by the hand, not one spoke words of Godspeed and brotherly love. He went to his room utterly prostrated. From his new-born love to God sprang a love to all men, and he longed to lead them to his Saviour, and this utter coldness aroused and discouraged him, but his soul cried out: "Thou wert despised and rejected by those Thou didst love; Thou wert a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; they hid their faces from Thee. Shall the servant be greater than his Lord?" And he grew stronger and firmer and Christ nearer and dearer.

One of his brothers would see what was in that Bible, that so fierce a warfare should be waged over it;—and soon he joined his brother. Then the church roused herself, saying: "Surely, God is in this place, and we knew it not!" A revival followed, and over a hundred—one of whom was the only sister—united with the Church. And the young man resolved to be a minister, even though labor must go hand in hand with study.

As he left for school, the very debating club that had expelled him voted him an honorary member and gave him a handsomely-bound copy of Cruden's Concordance of the Bible, with kind words on the fly-leaf. And now he is welcomed to his home and reads the Bible to his parents.

His studies are not yet finished; but he told me this chapter of his life, and I have not changed it in the least.—*N. Y. Observer.*

### OBJECT TEACHING.

BY PROF. PAYNE.

A child is crammed with the multiplication table. He glibly repeats, Six times five are thirty, six times seven are forty-two, &c. He perhaps does not know what times means. He often does not know that six times seven is the same as seven time six. He knows six and seven, because he had experience of six nuts or seven marbles, but he does not know what forty-two means, because it probably transcends his experience. He has no idea in his mind corresponding to the word. It is a case of unlawful appropriation. If he had been required to make six heaps of seven nuts

or peas, and then mingled the heaps, and counted the result out, he would have obtained this idea; and then he would have known forty-two, whereas it is now a mere sound, nothing but cram.

And so with other tables. Getting them up to repeat merely by rote, without an intelligent perception of their meaning as interpreted by facts, is of the nature of cramming—it is unlawful appropriation. A child makes the sing-song of twelve inches make one foot, three feet one yard, &c., having no ideas in his mind corresponding to the words; it is rammed or crammed down. But suppose he had put into his hands a yard measure, graduated with feet and inches and counted the large divisions, and then afterwards the small ones, this would be feeding on fact-food, which would give him ideas, not on mere word feed which he could not turn into ideas. He would be gaining knowledge for himself. And then, with the yard measure in his hand, he could find the length of the desks, forms, or the floor of the room, which would be practically applying his knowledge. And further still, having gained the idea of a foot, he might by his eye, guess at the length of different sticks and rods, and then by actual measurement verify the judgments he had formed. All, then, would be natural feeding.

In the same way, by handling whole and divided cubes, he could learn by himself, and without cramming, that a three-inch cube contains twenty-seven inch cubes. In all these cases the same principle holds good. The child gains knowledge by observing for himself; and illustrates in his practice the laws of psychological action without telling or cramming.

But whenever the teacher, in defiance or distrust of the natural capacity of the child to observe and acquire knowledge for himself, to use his senses, and to tell in his own way what information they give him to compare and form judgment, to draw conclusions from accumulated instances, to classify and generalize, to discover and invent—by performing these operations for him, hinders him from performing them himself, and thus nullifies or neutralizes the advantage he would gain by doing his own work; the teacher is aiding and abetting the learner in the unlawful appropriation of the results of other people's labors, and is, therefore, whether he knows it or not, cramming and interfering with natural feeding.

### A HYMN AND ITS AUTHOR.

It has been said that those who train singing-birds sometimes select one with rarest voice, and keep it in a darkened room, where, at intervals, it may hear repeated a certain musical strain. The bird, cut off from outward objects, soon begins to imitate, and finally conquers the lesson, and learns to pour forth the very notes of the familiar melody.

How often are the sweetest voices of earth thus cultured in some darkened room of suffering. Such a voice was Charlotte Elliott's. From early years she was an invalid, necessarily compelled to lead a quiet life, although her father's home was in Brighton, one of the gayest seacoast towns of England, where, during many months of the year, visitors thronged, and owing to family connections, the young girl was in a large circle of distinguished friends. Music and drawing were delights to Miss Elliott, and her own talents in this line were unusually fine, while her keen intellect and accomplished conversational powers and poetic skill made her society attractive.

But ill-health laid its prohibition upon all these loved pursuits, and drew her still more and more into the "darkened room." Here she had time to look within her heart, and through bodily distress the sight led to much depression of mind and heart, until an event occurred which became the turning point of the spiritual life of this gifted author. Dr. Caesar Malan, of Geneva, was a guest of the family and became to Charlotte Elliott a spiritual father fully adapted to her needs. From that time for forty years, his constant correspondence was esteemed the greatest blessing of her life, and the anniversary of the date of his first visit was always kept as a festival-day, and on that day so long as Dr. Malan lived, letters passed from one to the other as upon the birthday of her soul to true life and peace. Those who have heard Dr. Malan converse, or are familiar with his writings, will readily conceive the meeting between him and this dependent Christian. He was a skilful physician of souls, and the remedy which he brought was the simple remedy of entire faith in the very words of God. Taking one promise after another, such as "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life," he showed the fulness and freeness of the blessed gospel, and then with peculiar tenderness pressed the point, "Will you make God a liar by refusing to believe his own words?" Under the teachings of this man of God, Miss Elliott's soul entered into peace and rest, which lasted, for the most part, until the close of her long life of weary weakness. Previous to this time, her tastes had led her to spend hours with the finest authors of the English