



The Family Circle.

WHY WILL YE DIE?

A great Rock stands in a weary land
And its shadows fall on the parched sand,
And it calls to the travellers passing by
"I will shelter thee here continually."
Then why will ye die?
O! why will ye die?
When the Sheltering Rock is standing by?
O why! O why will ye die!

A great Well lies in a weary land,
And its waters call over life's rough strand,
"That the great well is deep, with waters ripe,
Springing up into Everlasting Life."
Then why will ye die?
Oh! why will ye die?
When the great, deep Well is standing by?
O why! O why will ye die!

A wide Fold stands in a weary land,
And the sheep are called on every band;
And the Shepherd no wanderer turns away,
But He changes his darkness into day.
Then why will ye die?
Oh! why will ye die?
When the great, wide Fold is standing by?
Oh why! O why will ye die!

A rough Cross stands near a city wall,
Where the Saviour dies out of love for all;
Where the angels still tell the message blest,
That the way is now plain to endless rest!
Then why will ye die?
O! why will ye die?
When the Blood-stained Cross is standing by?
O why! O why will ye die!

—London Freeman.

A TERRIBLE FIRE OR WHAT MY LAST CIGAR COST.

BY M. H. JAQUITH.

My first cigar cost me a terrific sick-head-ache. The boys all said it would, but as I was an extraordinary boy, in my own opinion, I hoped there would be some interposition in my behalf so I would not suffer as they had; but it did not seem to me that there was any special let-up in my case when I tried it. However, as my mother had often told me, "it required courage and persistent effort to be manly," I supposed it needed the same virtues to be manlike, so I kept on, and at twenty was a confirmed smoker, as shakly and more nervous than my grandfather.

When I was twenty-three I married, and acting on the advice of my doctor, who told me if I kept books and smoked another year my bride would be a widow, we took our little all and started for the far West, where a friend of mine had gone some years before. I took a claim of one hundred and sixty acres ten miles from town; it was timbered and watered, and I proposed to make a stock-farm of it. My health was recovered; I could work early and late. Bessie was a true wife and helpmeet, and the baby, just beginning to talk at the time of my last cigar, was the light and joy of our home.

We had then been West three years. I had forty acres in corn, twenty in wheat, thirty head of cattle, and quite a stock of swine. Our little house was home-like and full of pretty things, while the log-cabin of our first year was a corn-crib, full of corn.

When I told Bessie what the doctor said, in answer to my question if she could leave father, mother, and friends and go with me to found a humble home in the far West, she had answered,

"Yes, George, I will go anywhere with you and do anything for your good, if you will leave off smoking here now, and for ever."

It was a sacred pledge to her, but I meanly evaded it by promising, "Bessie, I will never spend another cent for cigars."

It was a contemptible subterfuge, the old trick that is begotten by smoking, drinking, or any other ruling passion to evade the giving it up entirely. So during those three years when I went to town I often smoked if invited to, and to Bessie's remonstrances I would give the plea, "I only promised not to spend a cent."

One autumn day, after a wet summer and a long dry spell of weather, we needed to go to town. We had to cross a high prairie six miles in extent, unbroken by fence, stream, or tree, where the tall prairie-grass,

never trodden by hoof of cattle, was as dry as tinder.

Sometime before I had taken the necessary precaution to protect my house by ploughing several furrows around it, and, leaving a strip of fifty feet or so, had ploughed again and burned off the inclosed circle. It was a merry party that bounced along towards town behind our gay ponies that sunny morning, even though we had no spring-seat in our lumber-wagon and had to soften the jolting by spreading thick comforts over the board we sat on and had the baby in the cradle as being still easier for her.

We made our purchases, took dinner with our friends owning the store, and at five o'clock had started back homeward due south from town, our wagon well laden with supplies, among them a gallon each of kerosene, vinegar, and molasses; there was also a water cask we generally took along for a drink if we chanced to want one when crossing the prairie, but, alas, there was little water in it now!

When we were well out of town Bessie said to me quietly, "You have been smoking again, George."

"Yes," I answered tartly, "but it didn't cost me a cent." The fact was, the unusual smoking had made me wretchedly nervous, and, feeling at fault, I wanted to blame somebody else, so I added after a little, "I can't be in leading-strings all my life."

Bessie said never a word, but her evident grief vexed me still more; she busied herself with the baby, who was tired and fretful, and soon put her in the cradle behind us. While she was back there rocking the baby some spirit of evil tempted me to light another cigar that I had in my pocket, and when Bessie sat again beside me with her face turned the other way that she might jog the cradle, I was still pulling away at that terrible cigar.

I hoped she would say something, for I had a very mean reply in my mind to make her, but she did not, and when half through I tossed it overboard, saying contemptuously, "There goes the last one, for now, and it didn't cost me a cent either!"

I was a little startled to see the smoke curl lazily up from where it fell in the dry grass, but we soon passed over a little rise out of sight and I thought no more about it. Annie was sound asleep and Bessie faced around. After a time of silence she said, as if in meditation, "Our honor is the dearest price we can pay for anything."

My conscience smote me. I seemed to see a vision of a happy young girl leaving all she loved for my sake, and I had betrayed her trust in me time and again for a cigar. But I had not the manliness to own to these accusing thoughts and ask for forgiveness, but drove the ponies on while every breath of the soft south wind in our faces seemed to whisper, "You are a perjured liar and coward."

Busy in thought, I had forgotten that Bessie was by me. We were but four miles from home when, in a moment, the wind swept round to the north and chilled us. I stopped the horses, lifted the cradle over to the front of us, covered her, wrapped Bessie in a comfort, and was just starting on when there came a loud noise like thunder, not a crash, but a dead, heavy roar far behind us.

"Is it a hurricane?" asked Bessie.

If it only had been! But I knew the sound too well. That long roll was the fire-call, and looking back we could soon see the lines of fire sweeping towards us faster than any horse ever ran.

"O George, it is a prairie fire! Light a back-fire or we shall be burned to death."

She took the lines, and the frightened horses, to whose instinct that fire meant death, swept on, while I vainly searched my pockets. I had used my last match to light the cigar that had started this dreadful fire!

"I haven't any, Bessie. God forgive me—will you forgive me?"

Oh, the supreme agony of that moment! I can never forget its glimpse of that hell which remorse can make in any guilty man's breast.

"Never mind; you didn't mean it, dear. We are very near death now. God forgive us both. But oh, my poor baby Annie, must she die too?"

With chills of horror that went over me while the hot sweat of agony streamed from my face, I saw that the fire was fast gaining on us. I was incapable of thought, but Bessie said,

"There is a chance for us, George. We can wet the comforts with the vinegar, water,

and molasses, cut the traces, and let the horses go when we get in that patch of buffalo-grass on the next hill. We can lie down in the wagon and cover our faces with the comforts. Perhaps we shall not smother."

"O Bessie, can you forgive me?" I cried, as the horses galloped towards the place suggested.

"As I hope to be forgiven," she answered solemnly, and the earnest words of her reply years before, to which I had given such evasive promise, rose before me.

The frightened horses, as soon as cut loose, after one backward look as of pity on us, sped away, while we saturated the comforts, and, spreading one at the bottom of the wagon, covered ourselves with the others. Providentially, having taken a load of corn to town that morning, I had on the high side-boards which helped to break the flames.

The noise of the fire drowned every sound and the smoke was stifling. The air was full of flying cinders; the flames leaped high up, jumped over wide spaces of grass that the oncoming waves of fire speedily devoured. While crouching down awaiting the shock, confessing my guilt and penitence in words that could not be heard, Bessie suddenly darted from our covert and seizing the can of kerosene, that had been forgotten, hurled it far in front of us, and the tide of smoke and flame caught her before she was under the protecting comforts.

It seemed a lifetime to me while we were in that hell upon earth, the flames of which I myself had kindled. It was to my guilty soul like the day of judgment, and God's voice was thundering to me, "Thou didst it, thou art the man!"

At last the heat abated, the smoke cleared, and I thrust my head out in the blackness of darkness. Far ahead of us now were those rushing billows of flame: the sun at the right of us was as a ball of fire in the midst of the smoke; the freezing north wind was now only cool and grateful.

"O Bessie!" I groaned.

"Yes, George, I am alive," but her voice was as of one in a dream. She raised her hand to the cradle. I pulled the blanket off baby Annie; she did not move or stir. I hoped she was still sleeping.

"Annie, Annie!" I said, and lifted the limp little form.

Bessie roused quickly. "Baby Annie, baby, baby!" she cried. We chafed her limbs, we tried to breathe life into her, but in vain; our baby was dead.

It was a forlorn sight two panting horse-men saw ahead of them a half-hour after—a man crawling along with a dead baby in his arms, haunted by an accusing voice saying, "You did it!" while a white-faced woman beside him was saying gently, "Dear George, I love you best; I have you still; you did not mean to."

The fire had been seen from town. When the wind turned they feared it would overtake us, and had come, as it proved, to our assistance. They lifted us on their horses, and as the sun was setting we rode down the hill that overlooked our valley home, but there was no home there; only smoking ruins and the panting horses and cattle in the little creek close by were left to mark our former Eden.

For weeks Bessie hovered between life and death, and her health was permanently shattered; in throwing out the kerosene can she had taken so much heated air in her lungs, and the shock and terror affected her mind. I do not think she would ever have rallied except for my miserable sake; she wanted to live that I might not be her murderer also.

No more baby voices have ever since been heard in our lonely home, made far away from where everything was so painful a reminder of what my last cigar cost me.—*Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

GIVING.

A good deal has been written respecting pecuniary contributions to the missionary cause, but there is reason to believe that the church has not yet attained to the true standard of giving. It strikes us that one tenth should be regarded as the minimum amount to be contributed, hence we agree with the writer who says that the "man who does not give one-seventh of his time and one-tenth of his income to the Lord, is not only a good deal less than a Christian, but also less than a Jew." Paul tells the Christians at Corinth

that on the first day of the week they a e to lay by in store as God hath prospered them. If all, or even the majority, would act in this manner, the treasury of the church would always be replenished. It is not lack of means, but lack of a willing mind, that hinders. The church has money, brains, organizations, rivers of prayers, and oceans of sermons, but she lacks in power. This power is the *sine qua non* in missionary work.

It has sometimes occurred to the writer, that native Christians in heathen lands often come nearer the Bible standard of giving than some in countries long since evangelized. Raiatea, in the Southern Pacific, was regarded as the very climax of darkness and degradation. The Gospel banner was unfurled, and king and people are now civilized and Christianized; and in May, 1882, a new church was dedicated, which cost \$8,760, every cent of which was paid at the dedication. Bishop Sargent, in South India, tells of a man who contributed ten rupees (\$5) to the funds of the church, and on being told that the amount was too large for him, he said, "Oh, sir, I am only giving back what God has given me."

Archdeacon Kirkby, among the Indians in Manitoba, tells of a man who gave a silver-fox skin as his gift. This was literally giving to God the best, as that is the most valuable fur in the country, and the skin thus presented sold for \$12.50, probably about one-fourth of the poor man's winter's hunt.

It is stated that the contributions of the Japanese churches would have been equivalent here to \$20 per member. Twelve of the sixteen, though of very recent formation, received no help from the missionary treasury (American Board) last year. The pastors have led their people in the practice of self-denial, some of them receiving, as salaries, only a fifth, or even a tenth, of what they can have if they will enter the government service. The same liberality is seen in Eastern and Western Turkey, although famine recently possessed the south-eastern portion of Asiatic Turkey. Ought not these, and like facts, shame some of us, who pride ourselves a little on giving three or four percent, of that abundant income which the Lord lends us? The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon says: "I knew a lad in Christ once who adopted the principle of giving a tenth to God. When he won a money prize for an essay on a religious subject, he felt that he could not give less than one-fifth of it. He had never after that been able to deny himself the pleasure of having a fifth to give. God has wonderfully blessed that lad, and increased his means, and his enjoyment of the luxury of luxuries—the luxury of doing good." No doubt that lad was Mr. Spurgeon himself.

Would that every Christian who may read these lines would ask himself, "How much do I owe unto the Lord?" We want more close personal scrutiny on this matter. Too many contribute from impulse. We would have the question of duty settled between each Christian and the Saviour. He gave his life for us, what have we given for Him? A day of "Intercession for Missions" was observed in Glasgow. A stranger present at the meeting was so impressed with a sense of his past neglect, that he sent in an anonymous contribution of \$10,000. Solemn reflection in this instance produced good results.—*The Missionary Outlook.*

ACCURACY, RAPIDITY, NEATNESS.—These three words, in their order, make the conditions of a written problem. Accuracy is the first condition and desideratum, rapidity the second, and neatness the third. Too many teachers sacrifice everything to accuracy, claiming that to be the sole object of performing the problem; forgetting, possibly, that rapidity and neatness are as much necessary means to that end as is a knowledge of the principle involved in the problem. A good plan—good, because we have tried it and found it to be good—is to have the pupils write at the top of their slates or papers, in large letters, these three words, and insist that the words shall meet the eye and dwell in the mind during the operation of a problem in arithmetic. If need be, the words may be written when each new problem is begun, the repetition of them serving to fix their meaning in the pupil's mind. When the problems are performed, the slates or papers may be exchanged, the best ones under the condition noted and shown to the class for emulation, copy and improvement.