

The Family Circle.

DAYS.

What is the message of days, what is the thought they bring—
Days that darken to winter, days that sweeten to spring?

Is there a lore to learn, is there a truth to be told?

Hath the new dawn a ray that never flashed from the old?

Day that deepens to night, night that broadens to day,

What is the meaning of all, what is the word they say?

—Silence for aye and ay, and the heart-beats never cease

Till toil and life and the day are the night and death and peace.

—John Hall Ingham, in *October* Scribner.

WHAT CHILDREN READ.

Did you ever see a "pap-rag?" It is a piece of soft cloth in which is tied up a spoonful of sugar. Be sure to leave the ends of the cloth so long that they cannot get into the baby's mouth; then lay him down, put the sugar end between his lips, and let him suck. It will keep him quiet for hours at a time. He will really enjoy it, for the taste is excellent and the sucking easy. You also will be tranquil and unmolested—for a season. Later on the baby will probably die of starvation. The excellent milk you offer him will not assimilate. Or he will live a dyspeptic, whose food will chronically disagree with him—but he will have had such a pleasant babyhood!

Do you exclaim at the ignorance and laziness of the "pap-rag" method? I assure you that it is the one most in vogue in the literary bringing-up of children, even if, physically, it has somewhat gone by.

Nine-tenths of the books written for children, given to children by loving relatives at Christmas and birthday festivals, provided for children by keen publishers with a good eye for the market, are mental "pap-rags."

Were the children of previous generations Titans in intellect, and are those of the next pygmies? If not, how can we account for the pitiable change that has come over the juvenile reading public? Pope said that, *until he was twelve*, Waller, Spenser, and Dryden were his favorite poets. Most boys of twelve would now be considered prodigies if they were aware that the works of these worthies existed. When Walter Scott was ten, he was curled up in a window-seat pouring over "Percy's Reliques." Some manly boys of ten—alas, how few!—now read "Ivanhoe" and "Marmion;" most of them prefer Oliver Optic. I lay this charge, myself, to the "pap-rag." It is no longer the fashion for children to chew, mentally—they only suck sweet softness in indefinite quantities. This they do because their parents and guardians are either too ignorant or too lazy to study the hygiene of literature.

Some day we certainly must wake up to the ruinous effect of a long course of reading pretty little stories, nice for children! Vulgar books, bad books, ill-written books, are all to be had, but they are seldom selected, and the danger from them is a trifle compared with the demoralizing habit of constantly reading books that can be taken in without a mental effort of the feeblest mind—books which never awake the imagination,

never arouse the fancy, never stimulate intellectual curiosity—books which are neither milk nor meat, only "pap-rags."

Suppose that, instead of "Percy's Reliques," a kind friend has supplied Walter Scott with "Little Lord Fauntleroy!" This is a pretty story, pleasantly written, and has caused the sale of an infinite number of velveteen knickerbockers and broad lace collars. It is adapted to the slightest mental capacity. Its colors are laid in broadly. Vice in the shape of a false claimant is promptly punished by being put into an illustration in which his knickerbockers don't fit him, and virtue is as promptly rewarded by beautiful clothes and an elevation to the English peerage. Can anybody fancy that on such a cud as this Scott could have chewed for long, happy days and years? Boys of the nineteenth century owe their ideal of the heroes of chivalry to Sir Walter. One of his proudest titles is "the delight of generous boys." But he wasn't fed on any such diet as this and a thousand other "pretty stories." When he read, his mind worked.

But work is what we are afraid of, apparently, for our children. If one of them shows an affinity for reading, and is a girl, she is buried under "Elsie Books;" if a boy, he is swamped in "Brownie Books." There was a time when a good, healthy boy read "Gulliver's Travels" instead of the "Brownies' Travels," and didn't get a bit of harm from the coarseness of the book, and reveled in its racy wit, and took in, with blissful unconsciousness of the fact, splendid lessons in his own tongue from one of its great masters.

I asked a clever, cultivated man of forty the other day what book he cared for most as a little boy. He said: "Pope's 'Iliad.' I never had enough of it, and I love it now."

Painful as it may be to us to exact any mental effort from our children, they must make it at some time if they are going to college. Entrance examinations in English literature are now becoming general. Wouldn't it, on the whole, be easier if a habit of reading things worth remembering were established?

It is possible to begin to "fit for college" when a very little child—but not unless some one will take thought about it.

I groan in spirit when I see the task before a boy and girl in the way of "getting an education," and observe that general reading is supposed to be no part of it. No one wants a lot of little prigs in the nursery, but children can have the beginnings of culture without priggishness.

"Have you children eight years old? Get 'Tom Brown's School-Days.' Tell them in your own words the first three chapters, and then let them read—or, if necessary, read to them the rest. 'Tom Brown' is a part of the entrance examinations at one of our great fitting schools this year; and 'Tom Brown' read will be remembered!

Get 'The Tale of Troy,' done into English by Aubrey Stewart, late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Here is a charming, simple version of the Iliad, in beautiful English, fascinating reading for any one, delightful to a little child, as I know by experiment. Then follow it with stirring passages from Pope's "Homer." Get the volumes of "St. Nicholas" con-

taining Adam Badeau's "Great Battles of the Civil War." Skip all the "pretty stories" in the magazine—they really do not pay!—and read "Sheridan in the Valley," "Grant at Vicksburg," "Sherman's March to the Sea," "The Three Days' Fight at Gettysburg." You will give infinite pleasure and get absorbed attention—and American history is part of the college "preliminary examinations." Have you seen "Wordsworth for the Young," edited by Cynthia St. John. Little children whom I know love this book. It is cheaply but profusely and prettily illustrated, and by and by "Wordsworth" will be on the examination papers.

But this is from the economic, labor-saving point of view! Think on the other hand, of the stores of pleasure in Scott and Dickens and Cooper of the banded twig—if only a small boy's mother will take time to "edit" them with him—telling, not reading, the story when it drags a bit. Think of the delight of a boy in Professor Palmer's prose translation of the "Odyssey" if he has had the "Tale of Troy" before it. We owe this pleasure to children. We owe them the training which will make them want real books. If they take pleasure only in "pretty stories," we must lock the book-cases and write across them the lines of the Norwegian poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson:

Close them awhile from me—
Help me to long for thee.

—Blanche Wilder Bellamy in the *Outlook*.

TWO TRAVELLERS IN ARMENIA.

At the present crisis in Turkey, when the whole world is uniting in the fiercest condemnation of the "unspeakable Turk," it is well to call to mind the situation immediately preceding these outbreaks. As soon as the Berlin Treaty was signed, the Armenians commenced to look anxiously for the promised reforms, while the Turks realized with increasing clearness that these same reforms involved most serious dangers to their own government. The delay in the enforcement of the treaty emboldened the Turks, and disheartened the Armenians. Another disturbing element was the presence in the empire of men, chiefly Russian-Armenians, who preached everywhere the policy of insurrection as the only means of forcing the powers to act. The extent to which they succeeded in stirring actual revolution has been grossly exaggerated by the Turkish government, but they certainly did much to create a general feeling of uneasiness which made the tension between Turks and Armenians almost unendurable, and which threatened to result at any moment in open conflict.

In the recent work of Mr. Weeks, from the Black Sea through Persia and India, this state of affairs is alluded to in the first part of the volume, and at the moment when Mr. Child and Mr. Weeks set out on their journey through Armenia the political atmosphere seemed heavy with the gathering storm. They were detained in the city of Erzeroum by the discovery of an error in their dragoman's passport. The mistake was made at the American consulate in Constantinople, and by some oversight this document allowed the bearer to proceed only to Van (his native city), but not to cross the Persian frontier.

The fact that this dragoman was an

Armenian from Constantinople furnished the Vali with a sufficient pretext for refusing his signature, and it was only by a successful piece of diplomacy that the two travellers finally obtained a new passport for him. Erzeroum being a fortified stronghold within a short distance of both the Persian and the Russian boundaries, all strangers were at that moment regarded with suspicion, particularly as the Turkish authorities were then on the lookout for parties engaged in smuggling arms across the frontier.

In a recent conversation Mr. Weeks alluded to these matters, and spoke of the state of fear and anxiety which prevailed among the Armenians of Erzeroum. The travellers had made the acquaintance of a young man belonging to a prominent Armenian family of that city during the journey from Trebizond. Upon arrival at Erzeroum they were invited to his father's home, and were shown with great mystery and secrecy one or two old books in their native tongue, treating of the antiquities of the city, and illustrated by rude wood-cuts. Even these books were proscribed by the Turkish government, and were kept hidden away, to be shown only to those in whom they had confidence. Many more instances of a similar character were cited. But in this, as in every question in which the wily Moslem plays a part, there are many phases, and experience teaches the diplomat to put his faith neither in princes nor in their subjects, to believe nothing but what his eyes have seen, and that with reservation; for the astute Mussulman has more than once proved himself a match for Frankish diplomacy.

When the whole truth is known, many years hence, it will appear that not merely Abdul Hamid and his Kurdish allies on the one hand, and the Armenian revolutionists on the other, but the proudest nations of Christendom had a share in the responsibility for a series of massacres unsurpassed in the world's history.—*Harp-er's Weekly*.

WHO WAS HE?

He lived hundreds of years before Christ. He was the son of a king and the only one of his brothers and sisters who escaped the murderous hand of his grandmother. His life was spared by the thoughtful care of an uncle and aunt, who hid him and his nurse for six years, during which time his grandmother occupied the throne.

In the seventh year of his age a successful revolution conducted by his uncle placed him on the throne and freed the country from his grandmother's tyrannies. He was received and inaugurated with shouts of acclamation, while the wicked queen, his grandmother, was seized and hurried to instant death. His coronation took place on the Sabbath day.

For twenty-three years, during the life of the uncle who had kept him from the clutches of his wicked grandmother, he ruled well and his reign was prosperous.

But when the uncle died, the young king allowed himself to be led into wicked practices by evil men. He caused his cousin to be stoned to death because he reproved him for his wickedness. Divine judgments were not long delayed. During a severe illness, probably caused by wounds received in battle, two of his servants conspired against him and slew him in his bed. His reign lasted forty years—from 878 B.C. to 838 B.C.

Who was he?