

Brothers and Sisters

BY CHARLES WAGNER.

I WISH to twine a garland here for the little sisters of consolation who know how to share our pain, by a soft word bring balm to our wounds, and soothe away our griefs in a kiss. Those little sisters do not like us to cry, they dry our tears; they do not like us to quarrel, they reconcile the disputants. When we fall, they pick us up; when we tear our clothes, they mend them; when we hurt ourselves they bind up our wounds. They are indulgent, too, these charming little sisters, and have treasure stores of kindness even for those upon whom paternal severity has justly descended. They visit prisoners in dark corners, and do not fear to compromise themselves by caressing little brigands of brothers condemned to temporary exile for their misdeeds.

It was in the beautiful time so far away that I still had my father, who died young, and the family was unbroken. First of all, in my eyes, came a little sister, my inseparable companion; we went everywhere together, hand in hand. When in the course of our wanderings we came to one of those narrow planks which make bridges for the little brooks along our country lanes, we held each other faster than ever, lest one of us should fall into the water; and often, thanks to this precaution, we both fell in together. One day when I had gone out alone, I committed a grave misdeed that would certainly not have happened had my little sister been along with me; I lighted a fire which spread to a hedge running near a barn. The excitement was intense, and my punishment was exemplary.

On the evening of this fateful day, I was in my bed, my conscience goaded by remorse, my stomach gnawed by hunger; I had been quite justly sent there supperless. When my little sister came to say good night, as she always did, bending over to kiss me, she slipped into my hand, without saying a word, a potato still hot from the hearth.

It is many years now since she died, the dear little sister, but I have never forgotten that, and, though I live as long as a patriarch, I never shall.

But let us leave this childish world where little brothers and sisters try their first tilts of life, and turn to youth with its wider horizons. If the younger years have well fulfilled their mission, have been a veritable school of brotherhood, relations more and more close and conscious have been established between children of the same household. The antagonists of other times have signed a peace and become allies. They have a common past, their traditions, all their memories intertwine and converge round the same centre, each has developed his personality in contact with the others; they know one another well, appreciate one another, have learned together lessons of mutual help and forbearance. The home, peopled with familiar figures that long custom has rendered indispensable, has become so surely their natural environment that nowhere else are they really themselves. It is there that each says what he thinks, and enjoys the unquestioned rights of citizenship. It is there that his name has its true significance, a sound sweet to the ears, which it is so good to hear! If his individuality, respected, encouraged in its original bent and loved for it, has been able to take permanent shape, in this very process he has learned to do for the others what they have done for him. The kindly hearth-fire shines for each and warms all; it broods and shapes and strengthens our characters, but it also humanizes them, subdues them, brings them into touch with one another. The home life nourishes at once personality with all that is most marked about it, and *esprit de corps* in all its strength. Each member knows himself to be free, distinct, goes his way with perfect ease, and yet feels himself thoroughly incorporate, a member of a body. In the home we find the meaning of life in common, of joint responsibility, of joys and sorrows shared; the circumscript and isolated existence of every man expands in contact with an existence richer and more complete.

I do not think the world can offer a more interesting sight than a fine family where the sons and daughters have loyally preserved the spirit of the relationship. As the children one after another gain in cultivation and power, the narrow horizon of childhood recedes. From his labor, from his studies,

from his contact from those without, each is constantly bringing in new treasure, and together they share it all, carry on one another's education. The family table becomes a rendezvous where all take delight in bringing their impressions and echoes of the great world outside.

And when they venture into this world, they go—so to put it—enveloped in souvenirs of the home. The name by which they are called, the family name common to all the household, constantly reminds them whence they came, where they belong. They have in their charge, wherever they go, a possession that must not be lost. *Noblesse oblige*, and in no other particular so rigorously as in what concerns the name we bear. Every child ought to be very sensible of this, and shape his conduct accordingly. When we dishonor or compromise our name, we must remember that it is not merely our own property which we are dissipating, but that of our brothers, our sisters, and the parents to whom we owe our lives.

A thing rarer among brothers than *esprit de corps* is friendship; it is often more ardent between strangers whom like tastes have brought into contact; yet when we come to love another with an affection sure and deep, we say that we love him like a brother. The phrases of a language are never vain formulas; in the beginning there is always something to justify them. They are documents, monuments. To love like brothers or sisters is not a superficial expression; however rare it may be, at bottom this friendship is the purest and strongest of all friendships.

Its most winsome form appears in the affection of brother and sister. A bond of this kind, where choice is added to community of origin, has not only a great charm about it, but also a powerful educative influence. In a brother who is her friend a sister finds a support, a protector, a guide; her life is enriched by many things that would not come into it without him. She gains independence, knows frank and joyous good comradeship; she learns to understand a young man's heart, a man's heart, and in a very simple and straightforward fashion, through a most natural and desirable intimacy.

Sandy Misquapam

BY REV. JOHN SEMMENS.

SANDY MISQUAPAM was a man of fine physique, of pleasing address, and of fair appearance, but he was a pagan. The word of truth, so far as he was concerned, seemed to fall on listless ears. His heart was as hard as his native hills. Others might weep over their sins, but the keenest observer failed to find in his face the most remote symptoms of emotion. He listened with the air of a critic. He invariably stayed until the last word was said, and went away wearing the appearance of utter unconcern. Of all his fellows he seemed least likely to become a subject of saving grace.

The time came for his departure to his winter hunting ground, some two hundred miles to the north. With a cold shake of the hand he went away, answering a parting exhortation with a hearty laugh and a few vigorous strokes of his paddle. Never mind, missionary, it is bread cast upon the waters to be seen after many days.

The winter which followed was a severe one. In the waning of the January moon, when the fur-bearing animals seldom went abroad and hunting was especially dull, Sandy's heart troubled him. He was sleepless, meditative, and sad. The medicine men prescribed for him; old wives shook their heads ominously and suggested witchcraft. The members of his family became anxious as he announced his intention of going down to the mission to seek for baptism.

His wife, supposing his mind was affected, brought the elders together. When these arrived they with one accord sought to dissuade him from carrying out his purpose. In vain they appealed to his superstitions; in vain they sought to work upon his fears. Borne up by a sense of duty, sustained by his high resolve, he procured food enough to last for many days,