

The Family Circle

FROLIC.

The children were shouting together,
And racing along the sands;
A glimmer of dancing shadows,
A dove-like flutter of hands.

The stars were shouting in heaven,
The sun was chasing the moon;
The game was the same as the children's,
They danced to the self-same tune.

The whole of the world was merry,
One joy from the vale to the height,
Where the blue woods of twilight encircled
The lovely lawns of the light.
—A. E. in *An Anthology of Modern Verse*.

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THE DAY'S EXPERIENCES.

You go through a day of varying experiences, and everything that touches your life—the words you hear, the pictures you see, the books you read, the companions you meet and with whom you associate, the friendship that warms your heart—everything that touches you leaves its mark on your character. And it is not a mere passing, transient impression that these things and these lives and experiences leave on your life. It is permanent work that they do. Not the great stones in the massive building are so wrought into the fabrics as these impressions are wrought into the character. Our lives are temples, and everyone who touches us is a builder. So it is also with the influences we throw off on other lives. They make their record there, and it is ineffaceable.

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VOCATIONS.

It is the glory of Catholic families in some countries of Europe, especially in Ireland, that each household is eager to see at least one of its members ascend the altar of God or become consecrated to His service in the religious life. For this the devoted mother and father offer their prayers to God. In their confidences to one another they discuss together which one of their little flock may be so happy as to receive God's call and join the army of His special followers. Though they prudently refrain from expressing their eagerness in so many words to their children, their devotion and zeal are contagious, and their prayers storm heaven, so that, as the years go on, they are often rewarded by the consolation of assisting at a first Mass, where their son is the celebrant, or at a religious clothing, where their daughter is espoused to Christ.

This disposition of generosity and fervor, this desire to give their dearest children for the service of God, brings a blessing on the entire household, and in particular on the parents themselves. The sweetest consolation of their declining years is often found, not so much in the prosperity of those of their children who have remained in the world as in the steadfast affection and fervent prayers of those who have devoted themselves to the service of God.—*The Monitor*.

THE TRUE GENTLEMAN.

The following was found in an old manor-house in Gloucestershire, England, written and framed, and hung over the mantelpiece of a sitting-room: "The true gentleman is God's servant, the world's master, and his own man. Virtue is his business; study, his recreation; contentment, his rest; and happiness, his reward. God is his Father; Jesus Christ, his Saviour; the saints, his brethren, and all that need him his friends. Devotion is his chaplain; charity, his chamberlain; sobriety, his butler; temperance, his cook; hospitality, his housekeeper; Providence, his steward; charity, his treasure; piety, his mistress of the house; and discretion his porter, to let in or out, as most fit.

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PATRON SAINT OF LITTLE GIRLS.

The tongues and pens of all nations, according to St. Jerome, are employed in the praises of St. Agnes, who overcame both the cruelty of the tyrant and the tenderness of her age and crowned the glory of chastity with that of martyrdom. Tradition has it that at the time of her death she was but 12 years of age. Her beauty had won for her the affections of the Roman Prefect's son. But she repelled his advances, saying, "I will none of thee, thou prey of death, for I have been won by another lover. . . . He hath placed a sign upon my brow, that I should have no other lover but Him. . . . To Him alone in true confidence do I commit myself, for loving Him I am chaste, receiving Him I am a virgin."

Angered by her refusal, the rejected suitor denounced her to his father as a Christian. When haled before the tribunal, no manacles could be found small enough to confine her slender wrists. Young and tender as she was, she was protected by an angel. She was cast into the fire, but the flames arched above her head and refused to harm her. Finally, the Prefect ordered that she should be beheaded. Kneeling down and drawing her long hair over her face she crossed her hands upon her bosom and awaited the blow. "Like some rare plant, whose slender stalk, white as a lily, bent with the luxuriance of its golden blossom." The sword of the executioner flashed in the air and in another moment the virgin's snowy robe was dyed crimson in her blood and Christ had received His martyr, His bride.

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THE USEFULNESS OF HOLY DESIRES.

The first step we must take, if we wish to be perfect, is to desire to belong wholly to God. Holy desires are those blessed wings with which fervent souls raise themselves above the world and reach the summit of perfection where they enjoy that peace which the world cannot give.

A holy desire, on the one hand, gives us strength to work for our sanctification; and, on the other hand, it makes our labor lighter. Just as the traveller who is at the foot of a lofty mountain and who has no desire to reach its summit will never go to the trouble

of climbing the mountain, but will remain at its foot in indifference and inaction, so the soul which has no desire for perfection will always remain in its lukewarmness and never advance along the road that leads to God.

Furthermore, all the spiritual writers agree in saying—and experience teaches us the same thing—that he who is not always desiring and trying to advance in the way of perfection, will inevitably go backwards and run great danger of losing his soul. St. Gregory explains this very well by the following comparison: If a person were in a skiff on the river and would wish to rest on his oars without going forward, or backward, he would nevertheless surely go backwards, for the current would carry him down-stream. Now, since the sin of Adam, man, as Holy Scripture says, "is prone to evil from his youth." If he does not always struggle against this downward inclination and try to become better, the current of concupiscence will drag him down-stream.

St. Augustine says that the life of a good Christian is a continual desire for perfection. He who does not keep in his heart the desire of sanctifying himself may be a Christian but he cannot be a good Christian. Just as no man ever succeeded in acquiring perfectly any science or art without first having entertained a strong desire of acquiring it, so no saint has ever attained perfection and sanctity without an ardent desire of attaining it.

It is, therefore, most important that we cultivate the desire of doing very great things for God, as, for instance, to love God more than all the saints have loved Him, to suffer for His sake more than all the martyrs, to have to meet all manner of insults and outrages in order to be able to forgive them, to accept the greatest labors and sufferings in order to save a soul, and other similar things.

Even though these desires will never be fulfilled, still they will be very meritorious in the sight of God who loves a good will as much as He hates a perverse will; and besides, by desiring great and difficult things, we will have more courage to do the easy things that make up the round of our daily duties.—St. Alphonsus Liguori.

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WHEN A MAN FINDS GOD.

I was headed once on the downward track;
I lowered my eyes to the sod;
But Something, you see, kept holding me back,
And, lad, that something was God.

I wondered what it was all about—
Why, not sink—We are only dull clod
But Something stuck through that desert of doubt,
And, lad, that Something was God.

I fought at last to see the light,
Then I had to choose the odd;
Was that Something worth the struggle and fight?
Aye, lad, for that Something was God!
—CORINE REID FRAZIER.

J. E. Fitzgerald

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