

The Family Circle

AT CLOSE OF DAY.

There's a certain tender feelin'
That I notice comes a-stealin'
Round my heart and never seems to go
away
Till our work has been completed
And once more we all are seated
To enjoy the restful closin' of the day.

Darkness somehow always finds us
In a state o' mind that binds us
To the fireside we have learned to know
so well;
Home to us is still a treasure,
And we get a heap o' pleasure
From its comforts, more than tongue can
ever tell.

Folks who cherish home and stay there,
Those who eat an' sleep an' play there,
Are the folks who know what happiness
can be.

Oh there's nothing half so pleasin'
When the world outside is freezin'
As this cozy nook that love keeps warm
for me.

When old-age at last has found me,
When its shadows creep around me,
And life's sunshine slowly fades an' dis-
appears.

Then with heart still free from sadness
In this home where all is gladness
I'll enjoy the peaceful twilight of the
years!

— O. Lawrence Hawthorne.



A CHILD'S NEEDLESS TEARS.

Those beautiful words of Cardinal Newman's—"A child's needless tear is a blood-blot upon the earth"—make us think! How often are we so wrapped up in our own troubles as to make ourselves completely unaware of the agonised suffering through which our children mentally pass? I do not say all of them. One does come across an instance of a child who is almost insensible to a sharp word; but that I think is the exception.

We, who have reached the age of maturity, can speak with open hearts of our keenest anxieties. There is scarcely one who has not some sympathetic friend to confide in. But the sensitive child is utterly tragically alone. Many are the nights spent in feverish tears, by these little atoms of humanity, because someone, whom they love intensely (as only they can love), has thoughtlessly wounded a tender heart.

I am not speaking of necessary correction—that is an entirely different matter—but of the needless tear. Is it not the child who teaches us to laugh? May we return that lesson with happiness. For children belong to God; He lends them to us, to be instruments of His love. Let them be the guests of our hearts, that the blood-blots upon the earth may be obliterated by sweet affection; and may we listen with open ears to their merry pipings, for the sake of Him Who came to us in the form of a little Child.—Alma Shelley.

CATHOLIC CUSTOMS AND SYMBOLS.

Holy Water.

One of the first things to attract the attention of a Protestant upon entering one of our churches is the font or stoup containing Holy Water. He has doubtless heard of our Catholic reverence for it, but probably misunderstands it, since the so-called Reformed Churches consider its use as unscriptural and superstitious.

This fact will strike us as a curious rejection by the Reformers of what is at once a beautiful symbolism and a salutary custom, recognised as such by the Greek, Russian, and Oriental Churches, as well as by the Catholic Church.

A Beautiful Symbolism.

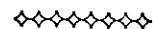
There is a beautiful symbolism here. For water has been looked upon in all ages, and by the ancient Jewish ritual as well as in that of many pagan cults, as both a natural symbol of purity and a method of spiritual purification. Read, for instance, the nineteenth chapter of Numbers (to give only one example from the Old Testament). The waters of expiation or purification are referred to several times in that one chapter, but we can almost see the sprinkling of Holy Water before High Mass in the direction (eighteenth verse) that a clean man shall dip hyssop in the waters of purification and sprinkle therewith the tent, the furniture, the men there. The "baptism of John," the precursor of our Saviour, was only a baptism "unto repentance," symbolical of that true purification which was afterwards constituted as a Christian sacrament by Our Lord. In each instance, water was used as a symbol.

The use of Holy Water is, however, not merely a beautiful symbolism, but as well a salutary practice. It is only a sacramental, for it was instituted by the Church, whereas Baptism is a sacrament, having been instituted by Christ Himself. Do not misunderstand the word "only" as I have used it. I have wished to make a distinction between works which of themselves confer grace, like the sacraments, and works which confer it partly through the power of the Church's blessing, and partly through the pious disposition of those who use the sacramental. Baptism brings "sanctifying" grace; Holy Water, if devoutly used, brings "actual" grace. The purpose of Holy Water is indicated in the words of its blessing. The salt that is to be placed in it is first exorcised in order that it may be "for the salvation of them that believe, for the health of body and soul," and similar thoughts are expressed in exorcising the water. When the salt has been put into the water in the form of a cross, both are blessed in a prayer asking that the Holy Water may prove a powerful protection against the wiles and terrors of Satan.

An Act of Purification.

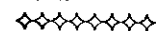
There is a symbolism, then, in thus purifying ourselves before venturing to appear in the holy temple of God, and the font is placed in the vestibule to permit us to do so.

Many persons bless themselves with the Holy Water also when leaving the church. The symbolism is lost in this case, according to one liturgical authority, although, of course, no pious intent will go without its appropriate reward.—Right Rev. H. T. Henry, Litt.D.



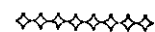
TO MAKE A HAPPY HOME.

Learn to govern yourselves and be gentle and patient. Guard your tempers, especially in seasons of irritation and trouble, and soften them by prayer and a sense of your own shortcomings and errors. Remember, that valuable as is the gift of speech silence is often more valuable. Beware of the first disagreement. Learn to speak in a gentle tone of voice. Study the character of each and sympathise with all in their troubles, however small. Do not neglect little things, if they can effect the comfort of others in the smallest degree. Avoid moods and pouts and fits of sulkiness.



A NURSE'S PRAYER.

Dearest Lord, may I see Thee to-day and every day, in the person of Thy sick, and whilst nursing them minister unto Thee. Though Thou hidest Thyself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognise Thee and say, "Jesus, my Patient, how sweet it is to serve Thee!" Lord, give me this seeing faith; then my work never will be monotonous. I will ever find a new joy in humoring the fancies and gratifying the wishes of all poor sufferers. Oh! beloved sick, how doubly dear you are to me when you personify Christ, and what a privilege is mine to be allowed to nurse you. Sweetest Lord, make me appreciate the dignity of my high Vocation and its many responsibilities. Never permit me to disgrace it by giving way to coldness, unkindness or impatience; and my God, while Thou art Jesus my Patient, deign also to be my patient Jesus, bearing with my many faults, looking only to my intention, which is always to love and serve Thee in the person of each and every one of Thy sick. Lord, increase my faith, bless my efforts, sanctify my work now and for ever. Amen.



MOTHER.

I have a friend whose love means all to me,
Who greets me with such trusting smiles
each day,
Who cheers and comforts me along the way,
And chases every fear across the lea,
And says her life is empty but for me.
This makes my heart feel very glad and gay,
And throws around my path a cheerful ray.
My love for her would fill eternity.
If I could cheer some heart as she has mine,
And cast a beam of sunshine o'er a life,
If every day I'd help some one in need,
And bring more souls to love their God
divine,
I'd then have eased my own most bitter
strife,
And know that He had marked my smallest
deed.

—Holy Ghost Magazine.

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