

The Family Circle

A YOUNG MOUSE'S FOOLISHNESS.

In a crack near the cupboard, with dainties provided,
A certain young mouse, with her mother, resided;
So securely they lived in that snug, quiet spot,
Any mouse in the land might have envied their lot.

But one day the young mouse, who was given to roam,
Having made an excursion some way from her home,
On a sudden returned with such joy in her eyes
That her grave, sedate parent expressed some surprise.

"Oh, mother," said she, "the good folks of this house,
I'm convinced, have not any ill-will to a mouse;
And those tales can't be true that you always are telling,
They have been at such pains to construct us a dwelling.

"The floor is of wood and the walls are of wire,
Exactly the size that one's comforts require;
And I'm sure that we there should have nothing to fear
If ten cats with their kittens at once should appear.

"And then they have made such nice holes in the wall,
One could slip in and out with no trouble at all;
But forcing oneself through such crannies as these
Always gives one's poor ribs a terrible squeeze.

"But the best of all is, they've provided us well
With a large piece of cheese of most exquisite smell;
'Twas so nice I had in my head to go through,
When I thought it my duty to come and fetch you."

"Ah, child," said the mother, "believe, I entreat,
Both the cage and the cheese are a terrible cheat;
Do not think all that trouble they take for our good;
They would catch us and kill us all there if they could.

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THE NUNS' SECRET.

The other day the Sisters of a prominent educational institution in this State (says the *Catholic Bulletin* of St. Paul, Minnesota) sent to this paper a little note requesting publication of the fact that through prayers to the Sacred Heart, Our Lady and St. Joseph, they had been blessed with a much-coveted favor. It was all so simple, that the casual reader probably glanced at the item and promptly forgot it. And yet, in those few lines was contained the grand secret of the phenomenal success of our Catholic nuns in their ever-widening beneficial work. They pray for success.

It is often a cause for wonderment among Catholics as well as those outside the Church how the nuns, usually beginning with little or nothing, are able in a few years to erect vast structures on the choicest sites and to draw about them the marks of material, intellectual, and spiritual success. Cut off, as they are, from the world, they yet seem to display an uncanny keenness in selecting the very best means to their proposed ends. Surely they are not possessed of worldly wisdom in an unusual degree; their lives are dedicated to heavenly contemplation, with material occupation as a mere medium of action; nevertheless, shrewd business men often are astonished at the wonderful results attained by these humble, simple women whose lives are wholly wrapt in God. Again, the whole secret is prayer. These pious followers of the Crucified rely much more upon the efficacy of prayer to God and His Saints than they do upon any human abilities they may possess. They work for God, and they place their cause in His hands. Accordingly the Lord provides means and instruments for the carrying out of His work.

Is not this an object lesson to Catholics in general? Devout prayer has accomplished more, far more, than all the wisdom and power and cleverness of men. The Catholic laity who are distinguished for their attachment to this divine method can also vouch for its genuine value.

A DEBATED QUESTION.

Your duty to your parents, or your duty to yourself. Which is the greater debt? That is a question that comes to so many young girls, and it is one of the hardest and most painful in the world to decide.

Mother has given you all her tenderness and care since before you were born. Hardly a day has passed that she has not made some sacrifice for you. Father has worked unceasingly to give you comforts and pleasures. It does look now as though it were your turn to devote yourself to them.

And yet . . . you have your own life to live, your own future to build. Surely your parents worked out their destinies in their own way when they were young. What shall you do?

Probably there is no question that is harder to help another to decide than one like this. You can't generalise. Each case must be decided by itself, and the basis of decision rests on all sorts of intangible things, such as character and temperament. Not all of the logic in the world can help much in these matters. The best that can be done is to view the problem in its general aspects, and from that broader vision comes back with fresher mind and clearer eyes to the intricacies of one's own phase of it.

On the one side is the idea of duty, and the ideal of sacrifice; on the other, one's chosen way—the thing that means life. No wonder that deciding brings sleepless nights and wan days.

There are some who plan their life's course and follow it ruthlessly without regard to others. But these are not the great spirits. It is not likely that the success so won brings happiness. It would be too hard and cold a thing for that. And besides, these usually build on the sacrifices of others.

There is a point we must not lose sight of in trying to get at the heart of this perplexing matter. Sacrifice just for its own sake is worth less than nothing. It is only a beautiful thing when it is far-seeing and generous. Blind unselfishness can be one of the most destructive qualities in the world—destructive of the character of others and of one's own humanity. Unquestionably one has a right to one's own life. For what else was the gift of life in the first place? Our lives, and the way of them, are important to ourselves. They must be, or they could never be important to others.

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PAYING HER WAY.

What has my darling been doing to-day
To pay for her washing and mending?
How can she manage to keep out of debt
For so much caressing and tending?
How can I wait till the years shall have flown,
And the hands have grown larger and stronger?
Who will be able the interest to pay,
If the debt runs many years longer?

Dear little feet! How they fly to my side!
White arms my neck are caressing;
Sweetest of kisses are laid on my cheek,
Fair head my shoulder is pressing.
Nothing at all from my darling is due—
From evil may angels defend her,
The debt is discharged as fast as 'tis made,
For love is a legal tender.

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TOM WAS PUZZLED.

An expedition was sent to one of the Southern States of America to observe the recent eclipse of the sun.

The day before the event one of its members said to an old darky belonging to the house where he was staying: "Tom, if you will watch your chickens to-morrow morning you'll find that they'll all go to roost at eleven o'clock."

Tom was sceptical, but, sure enough, at the time predicted the sky darkened and the chickens retired to roost. The Negro, amazed beyond measure, sought out the scientist.

"Perfessor," he asked, "how long ago did you know dem chickens would go to roost?"

"About a year ago," he replied with a smile.

"Well, if dat don't beat all! Why, perfessor, a year ago dem chickens wa'n't even hatched!"