Family Circle.

THE CRISIS.

"The crisis presses on us ; face to face with us it stands,
With solemn lips of question, like the Sphinx in Egypt's sands!
This day we fashion Destiny, our web of fate we spin;
This day for all hereafter choose we holiness or sin;
Even now from starry Gerizim, or Ebal's cloudy crown,
We call the dews of blessings, or the bolts of cursing down!

"By all for which the martyrs bore their agony and shame;
By all the warning words of truth with which the prophets came;
By the future which awaits us; by all the hopes which cast
Their faint and trembling beams across the blackness of the past,
And in the awful name of Him who for earth's freedom died;
O ye people, O my brothers!, let us choose the righteous side!

"So shall the Northern pioneer go joyfully on his way,
To wed Penobscot's waters to San Francisco's bay;
To make the rugged places smooth, and sow the vales with grain,
And bear, with Liberty and Law, the Bible in his train;
The mighty West shall bless the East, and sea shall answer sea,
And mountain unto mountain call: PRAISE GOD, FOR WE ARE FREE!"

WHITTIER.

THE CONTENTED FISHES.

It was a bright, warm, sunny day, and the wind blew freshly from the river. Not far from its shores stood a large, well-furnished house, that looked as though its inmates enjoyed every comfort that human beings could ask, as well as many a luxury. In one elegant room was a side-table, on which stood a glass globe, quite hollow, and filled with pure, fresh water, in which were swimming two little fishes.

A little rosy-cheeked, golden-curled boy, to whom they belonged, declared that they were sisters, and that their names were Mit and Kit. He thought that their names were so much alike because they themselves were, the only difference being that one wore scales of gold, and the other of silver, so that one was fair as a lily, and the other bright as a rose.

The great object of their little master was to catch them asleep; but often and often as he had crept into the room for that purpose, he had never yet succeeded. Their fins and tails were always moving back and forth, their eyes were always wide open, and their little mouths always opening and shutting. If they never seemed to sleep, neither did they to eat, and for the best of reasons—they had no food. Day in and day out, for breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper, nothing was there for them but the pure, fresh water, which the housemaid carefully changed every day; and yet food or no food, there were their little mouths always opening and shutting about something. At last little Franz thought he had discovered the reason—they were talking to each other!

No sooner did Franz make, as he thought, this discovery, than he became extremely anxious to hear and understand what they said. He was so much excited about it that he could neither talk nor think of anything else; but not a sound could he hear, nor if he had, not a word could he have understood. His only comfort was the hope that when Gottfried, his brother, came home from the high-school the next vacation, he would be able to understand and translate their conversation for him. Gottfried was, he knew, very wise—the wisest boy, he thought, that any one had ever heard of, for he read so much, said to their father so many things that he, poor, ignorant little boy as he was, could not even guess the meaning of. Besides, this wise brother had so often told him what the little birds and insects were singing and chirping about, that he must be able to understand the fish-language equally as well.

Fortunately for Franz, the vacation at the high-school was soon coming, and with it, in all due time, came Gottfred. Very kind he was to the little brother, tall and wise as he was, and when he found how his heart was set upon it, he promised to go into the large room, as soon as he had finished writing some letters about which he was in haste, and tell him just what the fishes, as far as he could understand, were saying. There was but one condition to this promise—Franz must not interrupt him until he was done. Franz readily agreed to this, and stood like a little statue at his brother's side, almost bursting with anxiety to say just one word, but never uttering a sound for all, until I don't know how many pages of paper had been written over from top to bottom.

But at last Gottfried's labor came to an end, and praising him for an excellent, well behaved little boy, he took him by the hand, led him to the table beside the globe of fishes, and sitting down in a chair, took him on his lap, and prepared to listen. Franz's eyes grew very large as the minutes went by, and he sat looking from the fishes to Gottfried, and from Gottfried back to the fishes. At last Gottfried smiled with a look of great pleasure, as he exclaimed: "That's it, Franchen! Now I can tell you all about it. Did you not see how attentively I was listening?"

"What have they been saying, Gottfried?" asked Franz, trembling with eagerness.

"Well," said Gottfried, "Mit began first. I find she is the eldest. 'Kit,' said she, 'I've been thinking,' and then she stopped."

"'Indeed, have you? It is not unlikely!' the other one replied merrily. "'There's nothing strange in that. But thinking about what, pray? Tell me that, Mit.'

"'Why, I was thinking what a nice and pretty home we had here in this globe. I like it a good deal better than living in a brook or a pond.'

"'Well,' said Kit, as if she were thinking about it, 'I myself am very, very glad that I am a gold-fish instead of a minnow or a herring, there are so many of them.'

"'The best of it is, too,' said Mit, 'that we did not get here of ourselves; we were put here.'

"'Yes, dear Mit, and what a pleasure it is to have everything so bright and rich and handsome about us. I can see so plainly out into the room where our dear, kind little master lives, that I think sometimes I can swim out to him, and then the first thing I know, I hit my nose against the glass.'

"'To be sure, Kit,' said Mit. 'I've made that mistake myself more than once. I know it would make that kind little Master Franz of ours *so* happy if we could swim out to him and let him stroke our backs, that I've tried to do it often and often. But somehow, when a hand comes over the top of the globe to dip down and stroke us, the water makes it look so big that it frightens me half to death. If I could only get over that fear, I would let him put his little hand in and stroke me to his heart content; but I can't. However, through the glass we can see the pictures on the walls, and the flowers in the vases, and the pretty things here on the table, all the same.'

"'Yes, Mit, and though it is rather rough handling when Mary, the housemaid, tumbles us into the net to change the water, it feels so much fresher and cooler afterwards, that it makes up.'

"'Very true, Kit,' said Mit, 'and we must not complain if we do turn a little faintish sometimes when the noon-day sun shines in so hot upon us, after we have enjoyed its pleasant beams in the early morning. Perhaps, if our dear little master knew it, he would not leave us there so long; but he don't think, I suppose.'"

"I will think, though, Gottfried," whispered Franz earnestly.

Gottfried nodded, smiled kindly, and went on: "'I should think not, indeed, Mit,' answered Kit, 'it would be very ungrateful. To be sure, it may make us feel a little drowsy, too; but our dear, good little master shall never catch *us* sleeping! We are very happy little fishes.' Just then," continued Gottfried, "she gave one of those little jumps, you know, that are so apt to startle one who happens to be nervous or to be nodding; did you not observe her?"

"Oh! she does that so often," replied Franz, "that I hardly think of noticing it, though I dare say I must have seen her do it. But I am *so* much obliged to you, dear Gottfried, for telling me their conversation. I wish I could understand fish-language myself."

"I think," said Gottfried, "that the most beautiful thing about Mit and Kit is their perfect contentment. They seem to enjoy heartily all the pleasures they have, without a single wish for anything that has been denied them."

Franz looked at him as if he thought his observation had some peculiar meaning, and perhaps the expression on Gottfried's face helped him to understand what that meaning was, for he said very gently: "I, too, will try to be contented to do only what the dear God gives me the power to do."

Gottfried kissed him with a smile, and took him out into the garden; but the little fishes went on sailing round and round in their little bright globe, speaking in sweet whispers, and yet preserving a wise silence, but to this day, if they are still there, never sleeping.—*Christian Times.*

A PUZZLED DARKEY.

The *American Agriculturist* tells a very good story of the mysterious adventures of a leg of mutton, on its way as a present from the deacon to the minister. We can match it with another of Virginia origin—not new by any means, although we do not know when or where we have seen it in print.

A liberal Virginian, whose Pastor did something in the agricultural line, sent him a fine young pig out of a litter of choice stock. The bearer of the present was an unsophisticated negro boy, and the distance to the minister's some miles. Piggy, much to his indignation of course, was tumbled into a bag for safe transport. The boy on his way had to pass a "corner," the country term for a place where a store, generally liquor-selling, a shop or two, and twice as many houses are gathered. There a company of loafers, after inquiring about his burden and its distination, seduced him inside, and while he was there, relieved his bag, which had been left in the road, of the pig, substituting a puppy in its place.

With this last load, he then trudged on to the minister's, accosting him, as he had been instructed, with, "Please Sir, I am Judge ——'s boy, and my master has sent you a pig." The clergyman untied the bag and shook out its contents. His surprise could not begin to come up with the bewilderment of the boy, to whom the transformation suggested very superstitious scruples respecting the character of his burden, involving doubt respecting its fitness for Christian shoulders. In fact it required sharp authority from the minister to induce him to re-shoulder it and return with the message that there was some mistake in the affair.

Arrived at the "corner," he was of course inquired of respecting the reception of his present, and very serious astonishment was *expressed* at hearing his tale respecting the mysterious transformation. It was not, however, difficult to get him once more to lay down his load and come in, and while he was out of sight, to make the re-exchange of pig for puppy. Thus ignorantly re-freighted with the original intended present, he returned to his master; and in reply to the not very gentle demand where he had been, and why his load was brought back, he stammered out an incoherent explanation, which was at length understood to mean that the pig was not a pig at all, but a puppy, or perhaps something worse in the shape of the last mentioned quadruped. The master impatiently seized the bag, untied the string, and shook out before the now thorough frightened boy—*the pig.* Scratching his pate, and rallying his best wits in self-defence, he said, "*I tell'e what, massa, him can be a pig or a puppy just as him please.*"

The explanation was doubtless the most available one at hand; and it was one which might not be inappropriate to the facility with which some of the humans change character and almost nature in more important characteristics than those which separate the pig from the puppy—especially when in politics, or in the more solemn matter of religious faith, times arise when it costs something for men to come out as they started.

THE WALDENSES.

From a very satisfactory account of the history, character and missionary enterprise of this interesting and ever faithful people contained in the last number of the *Christian World*, we take the following particulars:

THEIR NAME.

Waldenses—Vallenses—Vaudois—Valdesi, applied to them at different times by various authorities, are evidently derived from the valleys, their original home "from time out of mind, and before the dukes of Savoy became princes of Piedmont," they were "men of the valleys." Much learning has been employed to prove that they were of more recent origin, and named after Peter Waldo, &c., &c., to save some Roman Catholic interests; but we believe the above is the conclusion satisfactorily established by the most recent and extensive historical investigations.

THEIR ORIGIN.

We speak of them not ethnologically, but religiously; for not their blood but their religious faith and practice are the distinguishing characteristics of the Waldensians. The testimony which they give of themselves is, that their fathers occupying those same valleys held the same faith from the days of the apostles. In a petition presented 1559, to the persecuting Philibert Emanuel, duke of Savoy and prince of Piedmont, they use these words: "We likewise beseech your royal highness to consider, that this religion which we profess is not only ours, nor hath it been invented by men of late years, as is falsely reported; but it was the religion of our fathers, and grandfathers, and great-granfathers, and other yet more ancient predecessors of ours, and of the blessed martyrs, confessors, prophets and apostles, and if any can *prove the contrary* we are ready to subscribe and yield thereto." It is remarkable that in all the replies of their persecuting princes to such addresses,—replies dictated doubtless by the most learned priests,—the above pretensions are always passed over in silence; no attempt made to prove them apostates from the Romish Church. If their claims to antiquity could have been denied with decent plausibility, it would have been done by these princes to justify their cruelties. Voltaire says: "Auricular confession was not received in the Alps in the eighth and ninth centuries, of this Alcuin complains in his letters. The people of those districts seem ever to have had a disposition to adhere to the usages of the primitive church. * * It is a thing remarkable enough that these men, almost unknown to the rest of the world, should have constantly persevered, from time immemorial, in usages which have been changed everywhere else." That Peter Waldo, the rich merchant of Lyons, was not their founder, as the Romanists pretend, is proved by their writings still extant. These date back far beyond the birth of Peter Waldo, and show them then to have been an organized Christian people.

WHO FIRST PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO THEM?

This, history does not reveal. But it is probable that the early missionaries going out from Rome soon after the time of Paul penetrated these mountains; for the road from Italy to France and Spain passed that way. If Paul ever made his proposed journey into Spain (Rom. 15: 28) he probably traveled that road, and not unlikely was the first Christian preacher to these "men of the valleys."

IMPORTANCE OF THESE VALLEYS TO THE TUTH.

These valleys were the rallying point for the various classes in the surrounding countries who held the evangelical doctrines. In the valley of the Po, Romeism was resisted till the tenth century, and her images extended even from Turin,—and in France and Spain numerous Bible Christians existed still longer. When Papal persecutions on the east side in the 10th and 11th, and on the west in the 12th and 13th centuries, denied the rights of conscience to the true worshipers and poured out their blood like water, probably these narrow valleys hidden and defended by nature's grandest fortifications, received large accessions. They there cherished, preserved and defended the truth as it is in Jesus, when elsewhere it had fallen and was trodden out by the feet of the "scarlet beast."

THEIR MISSIONARY SPIRIT.

Always have they counted themselves the missionary people for the surrounding nations. In the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries, by such men as Peter de Bruys, Henry of Lausanne, Lollard, Peter Waldo and his poor men of Lyons, did they leaven the south and middle portions of France, the north part of Spain, England, Flanders, Germany, Poland and Hungary, with a pure Gospel; and they were, doubtless, the parent stock of all who held the same faith, though called by different names, derived from their respective leaders or localities, as Puritans, Cathari, Leonists, Lollards, Albigenses, Vaudois, &c. Such was their growth in the 12th and 13th centuries that the French Roman Catholic historian says: "The condemnation of these heretics did not stop their progress. They spread, especially in Burgundy and Flanders, and gained over the greater part of the ecclesiastics and nobility of High, and a part of Low, Languedoc." And Raymond, Count of Toulouse, asking aid of the church to put down the heresy, in his dominions, says: "I confess I am not strong enough to accomplish it; for the most distinguished of my subjects have been seduced, and have carried away with them the quarter of the people." Raymond afterwards himself espoused the "heresy," and died in its defence.

At Pra del Tor, in the valley of Angrogna, ages before the Reformation, the Waldensians trained their young men for the ministry. Missionaries from this institution were sent to the Waldensian colonies of Calabria and Apulia in Italy, to Bohemia and to England, and probably scattered seeds which, watered by Wickliff, Huss, and Jerome of Prague, grew into the Reformation. Such was the number of their converts in foreign countries that at one time the missionary could travel from Cologne to Florence, and stop every night at the house of a brother. Nor were all who went forth as Waldensian missionary laborers ordained preachers. Many humble laymen of piety, who travelled into neighboring countries as pedlers, or itinerating merchants, were ingenious and efficient in recommending and diffusing the pure Gospel in those dark and trying times.

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