

Our Family Circle.

(Written for the American Presbyterian.) THE STREAM OF LIFE.

BY EDWIN H. NEVIN. We are sailing on, brother, Onward to the sea; Thence there's no return, brother, None for you or me.

THE UNSEEN FRIEND.

"Do come, Ned, only this once, just to see how you like it; it is first-rate fun, and not a bit of harm in it—do come."

The boy thus addressed shook his head, and removing the hand which his companion had placed entreatingly on his shoulder, moved back from him, saying, "No, George, I cannot; I promised I would not play billiards, and I won't break my word."

"I O no, ma'am! I love my father, who is very kind to me; but then I see him daily; and my mother died when I was quite a baby, so I don't even remember her."

"Dear boys," Miss Fairlie said, "think one moment on God's unspeakable gift. He gave his only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

George hesitated a moment, then eagerly accepted the invitation, saying, "Well, to say the truth, you have shamed me; for I know quite well that my father would not like me to play, though he had not actually made me promise not to do so."

"As they walked through the park, a beautiful pony scampered up to them. 'What a beauty! Ned, is he yours? And so tame, too! Is he your own?'"

"As they opened the house-door, a pretty little King Charles spaniel, with long ears, jumped upon Ned; in great joy at seeing him."

The boys remained some minutes amusing themselves with little tricks; then went into the drawing-room, where they were kindly received by Ned's aunt, Miss Fairlie.

Ned's aunt, Miss Fairlie. She asked George to remain to tea, which would soon be ready; and, till then, advised Ned to take him to the library, and show him some of his Chinese curiosities.

"Well, but, George, how can I help liking him? Month after month I receive new proofs of his love for me. And then I seem to know him from his letters also; and I hope to see him one day; for, when he wishes me, I am to go to China, to live with him; and already he writes to me that he has prepared rooms for me, and fitted them up with everything he thought I would like."

"I dare say you will," replied George; "you are a lucky fellow to have such a friend. Still, I say it is very odd."

"What is very odd, dear?" said a gentle voice; and George started as he saw Miss Fairlie, who had come into the room unnoticed, by either of the boys.

"O, ma'am, Ned was telling me about all his uncle's kindness to him, and saying how much he liked him, although he had never seen him; and I said it was very odd to love a person you never saw!"

At these words a light flashed on the boy's mind; he saw Miss Fairlie's meaning. Yes, he had such a friend; but could he say he had ever thought of him in that light? God did indeed lavish many gifts on him; yet how little he had loved Him, how little had he striven to please Him, as Ned did his uncle, by obeying his commands!

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Some days after the events we have written of, George received a small parcel, which, on unfolding, he found to be a prettily bound Bible—a gift from Miss Fairlie.

"There, beside you crystal river, There, beneath life's wondrous tree, There, with-nought to grieve or sever, Ever with the Lamb to be; Heirs of glory, that shall be For these and me!"

Those who quit their proper character to assume what does not belong to them, are, for the greater part, ignorant both of the character they leave and of the character they assume.

AN EXCUSE AGENCY.

[One of our Southern exchanges contains a circular purporting to come from an establishment for the manufacture and sale of excuses. It is very well gotten up, and calculated to set the reader to thinking. We give the concluding paragraphs, with the names of the firm.]

Send us a notice, as explicit as possible of the duty, and the corresponding excuse will be promptly forwarded.

We have a list of some of the more common excuses, such as we always keep on hand, and we subjoin a few of those most likely to be needed by your readers; promising that we are ready to prepare, at a short notice, any others that may be ordered.

1. For failure to attend church, especially in unpleasant weather, or at prayer, conference, or other minor meetings—twenty-five select excuses, well-arranged and indexed.

2. For not joining the Sunday-school, Missionary Society, etc.—fifteen excuses in package.

3. For dinking—one hundred and fifty excuses, mainly new.

4. For neglecting family worship—seven good and sufficient excuses, well tried and warranted.

5. For not becoming a Christian—three packages, one marked "World," another "Flesh," the third with the name of one of the firm; each containing twenty choice excuses selected from a large number, and every one of guaranteed excellence.

6. A miscellaneous assortment containing, among others, excuses for not giving; for inattention in church; for preaching poor sermons; for not visiting the sick; for Sunday visiting, sleeping or strolling; for worldly conformity; and many more, besides a few standard excuses of wide applicability, for wrong doing in general.

Bear in mind that we can furnish an excuse suited to any case whatever; and when you find it hard to do right, remember that next to doing right is the being able to present a good excuse for doing wrong, and give us a call.

B. L. ZEBUB, Prince, &c. DIA BOLUS, M. D.

WHAT A SINGLE SABBATH-SCHOOL ACCOMPLISHED.

In 1814, two young ladies opened a week-day mission-school at Norwich Town. The following year, a class of colored boys was taught in a room near the present centre of Norwich City.

Out of that humble beginning, of seven children taught by two young ladies, God hath brought great things. Among other fruits, twenty-six ministers of the Gospel are shown to have been, at one time or another, scholars or teachers there.

But it will here be said at once, that all men cannot be expected to render their family services equally interesting. That many have not the requisite knowledge nor the ability to impart entertainingly what they have.

Churches; George E. Porter, for a time superintendent of the Sabbath-school of Mount Vernon Church in Boston; Alfred Thomas, now superintendent of a Sabbath-school in Columbus, Ohio; George E. Sterry, active in mission-school movements in New York City; Jared W. Tracy, also of New York; and other earnest workers for the Master.

When it is considered that Miss Lathrop (afterward Mrs. Winslow), the founder of the Norwich school, was brought to Christ in childhood, connecting herself with the church at thirteen years of age, the importance of youthful conversions is magnified in every thoughtful mind.

HOW TO CONDUCT FAMILY WORSHIP. [From a recent tract called "The Family Altar," by Rev. M. R. Vincent, published by our Publication Committee.]

We discover in much of our family worship a want of tact and adaptation. Many most excellent parents, with the clearest appreciation of the duty of household devotion, succeed in making it one of the most unedifying of all religious duties.

1st. It is always attractive. There are very few who do not love to sing, or to hear singing when they cannot sing themselves.

2d. Most of the members of a family can join in it. Care should be taken to facilitate this by the proper selection of books, hymns and tunes. The simpler the better.

3d. We have the authority of Scripture for making this a part of all our worship. We are exhorted to praise Jehovah with songs, with stringed instruments and organs.

4th. This is the best possible preparation for harmonious and intelligent participation in the music of the sanctuary, especially in those churches where this part of the worship is not let out by contract to a quartette club, and where the one who "sings in church" is not made the focus of the frowns of the entire congregation.

But we cannot leave this subject without a special word for the little ones—the children of four, five and six years of age. O! how seldom does the family worship touch them at any point.

has something to do to contribute to its interest and profitableness. Family worship need by no means be confined to reading and prayer, though these, reverentially performed, are invaluable in their effect.

To-morrow, perhaps, you will read the account of the healing of Jairus's daughter, or the parable of the ten virgins. Set that bright-eyed boy or girl at looking for some information on oriental weddings or funerals, and when you come together again, let them tell you about the hired mourners, with their clashing instruments and hideous wailing, or show how our Lord's parable finds its perfect counterpart in the marriage ceremonies of the East.

Music, too, is a most powerful auxiliary to the interest of family worship. It will be strange if you cannot put your piano or cabinet organ to good use here. The value of this exercise is, apparent in many ways.

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Hence, there should, in all cases, be a part of the family worship especially for them; and if the family consists of little children only, it would be well to conduct the devotions chiefly with a reference to them.

THE CLOSING SCENE.

BY THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.

The following is pronounced by the Westminster Review to be unquestionably the finest American poem ever written:— Within the sober realms of leafless trees, The russet year inhaled the dreary air; Like some tanned reaper in his hours of ease, When all the fields are lying brown and bare.

The gray barns looking from their hazy hills O'er the dun waters widening in the vales, Sent down the air a greeting to the mills, On the dull thunder of alternate falls.

Where erst the jay within the elm's tall crest Made garrulous trouble around her unfledged young; And where the oriole hung her swaying nest, By every light wind like a censer swung;

Amid all this—in this most dreary air, And where the woodbine shed upon the porch Its crimson leaves, as if the year stood there, Firing the floor with its inverted torch;

Amid all this—the centre of the scene, The white-haired matron, with monotonous tread, Plied the swift wheel, and with her joyless mien Sat like a fate, and watched the flying thread.

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