

The Family Circle.

A SEASON TO DIE.

BY MRS. ENRICH B. LAMBERTON.

Oh! could I choose a time to die,—  
A season when my life should end,  
Ah! when angels from on high,  
Should with my soul to God ascend;  
Could I command the chariot wheels  
Of time, and roll them at my will,  
And thus control the foe that steals  
Around my heart with icy chill;  
My voice should say, Oh! let it be  
When nature smiles from leaf and tree.

Let soft, warm zephyrs float around,  
When they shall lay my body low,  
And tall grass wave above the mound  
With gentle sighing to and fro.  
May evening dew its moisture lend,  
Glist'ning, like tears, on my lone grave,  
And e'en the chirp of insects blend  
With nature's praise, to Him who gave  
The holy calm of twilight hour,  
When grateful hearts proclaim God's power.

I dread stern winter's icy breath,  
And shrink from earth's cold, hard embrace,  
Though well I know how cold is death,  
And hard must be my resting place.  
Yet oh! to think that storms will come,  
And beat upon my new made grave,—  
That winds must whistle 'round my home,  
And tall trees groan, and bend and wave  
Their naked branches as they moan,  
O'er this poor form, left all alone.

It matters not, I hear you say,  
'Tis but the body lying there,  
It knows not cold, nor night, nor day,—  
The winter wind from summer air.  
'Tis true, so; but still I cry,  
With nervous dread of winter drear,  
Oh! let it be when I shall die,  
That happy season of the year,  
When nature dons her summer dress,  
And blooms in all her loveliness.  
ROCHESTER, Jan. 8th, 1868.

LITTLE MAY'S LEGACY.

[We copy this touching and excellent story from Skelly & Co's recent reprint.]

CHAP. I.—THE LITTLE GIPSY.

"Good-by, dear mother, good-by," said two little children as they went off to school one bright May morning.

"Good-by dears; good-by," was the answer, while Mrs. Somers stood at the door, shading the light from her eyes with her hand, as she watched the little figures run down the lane.

"There is two good children," she murmured, as she turned into the house again, to take up the baby, who was crying, and call Bessie, her servant, to hold him, while she went hither and thither, putting all things trim and tidy, in kitchen, storeroom, and larder, with a quick, clever hand.

Meanwhile, Robin and May tripped away, Robin carrying the green-baize bag of books, and May taking charge of the little basket in which both the children's dinners were nicely packed; for Ashcot school was too far from the pretty farmhouse, nestling under the hillside, for Robin and May to come home in the middle of the day.

The shadows would lengthen in the western sunshine, the birds would be beginning their evening carol, the cows turning from the farmyards to the green pastures, when Robin and little May would run homewards once more. Now all things were bright and fresh; birds singing in the trees, young leaves whispering to each other, as the pleasant breeze swept through them, while the spider's gossamer webs were shining in the sun, and countless dewdrops splangling them, and every tiny blade of grass, with diamonds. The children's hearts were blithe and gay; and I think, if you had seen them as they went along, you would have echoed their mother's parting words, "There are two good children."

Robin—or Robin Redbreast, as his father often called him—was just nine years old; May—or Maybird, as her father often called her—was not much more than a year younger. Happy, healthy, rosy, little ones they were, thinking little, as they went, of the many mercies from a loving and heavenly Father's hand, which were theirs; thinking less of the many—ah, how many!—children of their own age who had them not that sweet May-day. Little children who have health, and strength, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, a home of plenty and comfort, friends to love and cherish you, thank God every day for His mercies, and remember that all these things come from Him, and that He may see it best for you to withhold daily blessings that now you scarcely notice or think of. God does withhold them from many a child, and you to whom He gives them, must strive to show forth His praise, not only with your lips, but in your lives. Even a little child can do this. Will you not try?

Robin and May went silently on their way for the first mile. Then Robin shut a book, and said, "Hurrah! I know my lessons. Come, May, don't you?"

"Wait a minute, Robin, and I shall know them; but this last verse of my hymn won't get into my head."

Robin was off, chasing a white butterfly, before May's speech was finished; but when the hymn had got into her little head, she ran on too. The hymn is a pretty one: I wonder if you know it.

Little May had chosen it to learn while at home on Saturday and Sunday, to say to Miss Smith on Monday.

Miss Smith was always pleased when her little scholars said the Monday hymn nicely. I will write this, that little May learned, here for you:

"Night is over; light is streaming,  
Through my window pane 'tis come,  
And the sun's bright rays are beaming,  
On my happy Christian home.  
God has watched me through the night,  
God it is who sends us light.  
"Night is over; some poor children  
Have been homeless, sleepless, ill,  
God has let me rest so sweetly  
In my chamber, warm and still.  
Lord, I thank Thee for Thy love,  
Raise my morning thoughts above.

"Night is over; heavenly Father,  
I would bend my knees and pray,  
Help my weakness, guide me safely,  
Watch and help me all the day.  
Take away my love of sin,  
Let Thy Spirit rule within."

The rest of the way to school led the children through fields where flocks of quiet sheep were feeding, and cows lay in the sunshine, lashing the flies from their broad backs every now and then with their long tails.

Robin and May were amongst the first children at school. Miss Smith was at her desk, and smiled "Good morning" to her little pupils.

After the Bible lesson the Monday hymns were all said. Some knew them well, some stumbled through them, and some did not know them at all. Little May was not amongst these; her hymn had got into her head, and into her heart too, for when twelve o'clock struck, and the children went streaming out into the playground, May was saying over to herself the words,

"Some poor children  
Have been homeless, sleepless, ill;"

The scholars who lived near Ashcot School went home to dinner; but Robin and May ate theirs in summer in the playground, in winter in the empty schoolroom.

There was a fine old elm-tree growing close to the small iron gate, which was always kept locked, and which led to a narrow lane from the side path up to Miss Smith's house. An old stone, grown over with moss, served for the children's seat; and here May unpacked the little basket, and she and Robin sat down to dinner. They had been well taught—and Robin took off his cap, and stood up to say his grace, before they began. Monday's dinner had generally some little dainty, saved from that of Sunday, for the children. To-day it was a nice slice of cheese-cake, which after they had eaten the bread and meat, Robin and May divided.

May had just raised her piece to her lips, when she paused, and touched Robin, saying, "Look!"

Robin turned, and there was a curious little face peering at them through the bars of the closed gate. A dark brown face it was, with shaggy, tawny hair, hanging over the bright black eyes, which were looking at the children with an inquiring glance they did not understand.

May felt half frightened—almost inclined to run away out of sight; but Robin coolly took a bite from his cheese-cake, and said, "What do you want?"

No answer; but the quick eye followed the dainty morsel in Robin's hand, and a queer smile broke over the face.

"Is it good?" was the question at last.

"Yes."

Robin was eating up his cheese-cake very quickly; but May stood irresolute, too much fascinated with the little dark, strange face, to go on with her dinner.

"What do you stand there for?" asked Robin.

Again no answer; but presently another question, "Was you ever hungry?"

"Hungry? Yes; but I aint now. Come, May, finish your dinner, and let us say grace. I want to be off for a swing before school-time."

Robin was in a hurry to go, and did not notice that May had divided her cheese-cake, putting half into the basket, and only eating half herself.

"He must be one of the poor children; homeless, perhaps sleepless and ill," she thought, but she did not say so; Robin would not understand her—would only laugh at her, perhaps.

Soon he was gone, and May was left alone. Her heart began to beat fast. She had moved away—behind the high stone wall; but she knew, though she could not see him, that the child was still there. She was frightened, and yet determined to give him her cheese-cake. So, after a pause, in which to pick up courage, she moved forward again, and peeped. Yes; there he was—the strange, wild looking child, his little brown, dirty hands grasping each a bar of the gate, the eager, earnest face peering between them.

"Here," said little May-bird, stretching out the cheese-cake; "here, little boy."

One of the bare arms was thrust through the bars, and the dainty morsel was snatched and eaten before May could recover her breath. Then the little head nodded, and a broad grin showed a set of very white teeth.

"He must be hungry, indeed," May thought; "even Robin could not have eaten that big bit so fast."

Then she turned to the basket. A slice of bread and butter was still there; she offered it to her new friend, who grasped it as eagerly as he had done the cheese-cake, and then despatched it as quickly.

"What's your name?" May ventured to ask when another nod of thanks had followed.

"Jim," was the answer.

"Where do you live?"  
"Anywheres."  
"Anywheres?"  
"I be with the gipsies—I be. Sometimes I sleep in the tent; sometimes I don't."  
May thought of her pretty little white bed in the tiny room next her mother's, and sighed.

"Oh, poor little boy! Can you read?"  
But this was much too deep a question for Jim's capacity. He stared at May for another minute, and then slid down from the step into the lane, and was gone.

The school-bell soon rang, and May was in her seat. But she pondered much on Jim; and when, on the way home, Robin climbed a hedge, and said, "There is a gipsy or tramp tent out on the common; I can see the smoke," May clambered up to his side eagerly, and said, "O, let me see, Robin. That poor hungry boy said he lived with gipsies."

"What boy do you mean?"  
"Why, the boy who watched us eating

our dinner, Robin. I could not help giving him a bit when you were gone."  
"You silly thing for your pains, then! Gipsies and tramps, the whole lot of them, are thieves and vagabonds. Just you let Miss Smith see you feeding him, that's all!" was Robin's reply, as he slid down from the hedge, pulling his little sister with him.  
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

POOR PONTO.

One of the most affecting stories I ever heard about a dog was told me many years ago, by an uncle of mine who once lived in Paris. My uncle was walking on one of the quays, when he saw a man approach, holding a dog by a chain. The poor animal was frightened, and yet did not attempt to struggle as he was being led along. He looked up piteously at his jailor, and every now and then tried to fawn about his feet as if pleading with him. "Poor beast, he might know seemingly what was going to happen to him," said the man.

"What is going to happen?" inquired my uncle.

"Sir, I'm going to drown him; that is what will happen."

"But why, sir; are you his master?"

"I am, certainly his master, and he is old—poor Ponto! I am sorry, but it must be."

The dog gave a low whine, and trembling, crouched down to his master.

"He does not seem so very old, and drowning is a hard death," remonstrated my uncle.

"Sir, he is quite useless."

While he was speaking the words, the man unmoored a little boat, lifted the dog in and rowed to the middle of the stream.

When he came to where the water was deepest, my uncle saw him lift the dog suddenly, and throw him with great force into the stream.

If the master had thought that the dog's age and infirmities would prevent his struggling for life, he was very much mistaken, for he rose to the surface, kept his head well up, and trod the water bravely. The man then began to push the dog away with an oar, and at last losing all patience, he struck out so far to deal the dog a blow, by which he overbalanced himself and fell into the river. He could not swim, and now began the generous animal's efforts, not to save his own life, but that of the master who was trying to drown him. The dog swam to him, and seizing fast hold of his coat collar held him up until a boat put off to his rescue and brought him half-drowned and wholly frightened to the shore, his faithful dog barking, crying, and licking his hands and face in the greatest excitement of affection. I remember still the look with which my uncle used to tell how he stepped forward and asked the man, "Do you still think him useless—this noble, generous dog?"

"I think he deserves a better master," said a gentleman who had witnessed the incident, and there and then he made an offer to buy Ponto, but the man, embracing his dog, said hoarsely:

"No, sir, no, I was wrong; as long as I have a crust, I will give half to my poor Ponto."

A woman, who had a basket on her arm came up at the time and said, "I should think you would, indeed, or else you ought to be ashamed to look him in the face," and out of her basket she took a piece of meat, and the dog was feasted and patted, and made much of, and from that time as long as my uncle stayed in Paris he often saw Ponto on the quay, and the story of his generosity to his master made him so many friends that the dog's keep was no longer burdensome. No one was suffered to molest him, and his old age was doubtless the happiest period of his life.

MRS. BALFOUR.

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS AND THE OPERA.

CONDENSED FROM REV. R. M. HARTFIELD.

The question whether Christians may conscientiously countenance and support the opera is just now receiving a good deal of attention in our churches, especially in those located in large towns and cities. With deference for the opinions of those who differ from me, I wish to suggest some reasons why Christians should refuse to patronize or in any way encourage operatic performances. That they should adopt this course appears from the consideration, 1st, That by patronizing the opera they encourage and support a profession that works the moral ruin of most persons who engage in it.

There are exceptional cases; but, as a class, the singers and performers in the opera are known to be impure and dissolute. This is notoriously true, of the Italian women who sing and dance for the amusement and delectation of American citizens. Gay of plumage, with silver throats and melodious voices, they are nevertheless a cove of unclean birds. Nor is this to be wondered at. There are few women who can receive a European training for the opera and remain what Cæsar desired his wife to be. And the life of an opera-singer is fraught with perils from which few are strong enough to escape. On this subject Timothy Titcomb says: "I never hear of an American girl going abroad to study music for the purpose of fitting herself for a public musical career without a pang. A musical education, an introduction to public musical life, and a few years of that life, are almost certain ruin for any woman." How can it be otherwise, if, as the same author asserts, "they are constantly acting in operas the whole dramatic relish of which is found in equivocal situations or openly licentious revelations."

Knowing what we do of human nature, we can hardly hope that opera-singers and public dancers will be otherwise than corrupt in themselves, and the corrupters of others. And is it right or seemly in Christians to support a profession that corrupts and destroys most of those who practice it?

Men of the world may answer this question, as Cain answered the question "Where is Abel, thy brother?" by saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But no Christian may pursue such a course. We are required to look not every man on his own interests, but every man also on the interest of others. We may not bid God-speed to a business that drowns the souls of those for whom Christ died in perdition.

2d. Christians should not support the opera, for the reason that its moral tone is objectionable.

The plots of many of the Italian operas are immoral, not to say positively indecent. They hinge on intrigues, seductions, and adulteries of which it is a shame even to speak.

A friend of mine purchased at a music-store the librettos of twelve of the operas that are now fashionable in our country. On examining them, he found that more than half of all the whole number were saturated with the foul virus to which I have referred. How decent men and virtuous women can sit side by side and witness the unfolding of the plot of an opera like "Dog Giovanni," and not hide their faces for very shame, passes comprehension. It will be said by the Christian who is enamored of the opera that it is not the impurity of the plot, but the excellence of the music, that attracts him. Admitting this to be true, has the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ a right to countenance these indecencies for the sake of the music? Is the Italian opera so indispensable that we must have it, even when it is made the medium for diffusing the ideas that undermine the foundations of social and domestic virtue?

3d. The support of the opera by Christians is regarded as inconsistent and unbecoming by the irreligious world.

A Christian is not to be a slave to public opinion, but he is to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without." No Christian is at liberty to impair his influence for usefulness in the pursuit of a merely personal gratification. In his endeavors to walk as Christ walked he can afford to be misunderstood and misrepresented by an ungodly world. It is generally to his credit that the world charges him with fanaticism and folly.

They have, it may be, heard us sing with great apparent fervor:

"Not all the harps above  
Can make a heavenly place,  
If God his residence remove  
Or but conceal his face;  
Nor earth, nor all the sky,  
Can one delight afford,  
Nor yield one drop of real joy  
Without thy presence, Lord."

And when they see us at the opera-house, it never occurs to them that spiritual desires or holy affections have led us to the place. They rather feel like saying, "What business have these Christians here? The place is given over to the god of this world." And who can gainsay their words? If the children of Zion are joyful in their king, why should they join the giddy throngs who are vainly striving to satisfy themselves with husks and ashes? A Christian cannot frequent the theatre or opera without compromising his character in the estimation of the world. If he will vacillate between the house of the Lord and the house of Rimmon, he will be despised for his inconsistency—and he deserves to be.

4th. Such support of the opera afflicts large numbers of sincere and intelligent Christians.

It is not always easy for a Christian to determine in how far he is bound to respect the conscientious scruples of his brethren. Clearly he is not bound to renounce the right of private judgment at the demand of every weak and whimsical ignoramus who professes to be a Christian. And it is equally clear that he is not at liberty to treat with supercilious contempt even the weakest member of the household of faith. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves."

Moreover, the Saviour has so identified himself with his people that when we sin against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, we sin against Christ. In view of these facts, the Apostle adopted the following rule for the government of his own conduct: "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth."

Acting on such a rule, how often would members of evangelical churches visit the opera? But it is not merely the weak brethren with morbid consciences who are grieved when Christians countenance and support the opera. The intelligent and spiritually-minded members of our churches are the very ones who are most afflicted by such inconsistencies. The times demand whole-souled Christians—men who are dead to the world and entirely consecrated to Christ. We need spiritual athletes, seasoned veterans, who are at home amid the thunder of the hottest battle-field. Instead of these stalwart heroes the Church is infested with a class of dilettante Christians, who seem just fit

"To caper nimbly in a lady's chamber  
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute."

These exquisite young men have little taste for securing the highways and hedges to bring in the lost sheep of the House of Israel; but they know just where to find fancy neck-ties and nicely fitting kid-gloves. We need—O, how much we need—in all our churches, motherly Christian women as helpers in the Gospel. All around us are the children of sin and wretchedness, who must be reached and saved by Christian women, if saved at all. The work of saving them languishes; but our select ladies wear the most becoming opera-dresses, and are connoisseurs in laces, fans, and fashionable furbelows in general. It is no wonder that the truly godly sigh and cry over the desolations of Zion. The words of this prophet sound as if written specially for the times in which we live: "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach."—Independent.

ASYLUM FOR USELESS YOUNG MEN.

In every community there is a certain percentage of useless young men, whose stimate condition must excite the sympathy and consideration of every philanthropist. What will become of them? We do not put the question as to their future state, but how will they round off their earthly existence? They have no visible means of support; still they hang on, they vegetate, they keep above ground. In a certain literal sense, they may be said to live, more, as have a being. They lounge in offices, promenade the streets, appear at social amusements, play the gallant to good-natured ladies, and attend to the necessities of dogs. Their more quiet and demonstrative life may be described as an intermittent labor, in which meals, cigars, drinks and sleep mark the changes. Their existence would be a mystery but for their bearing relation to other substantial people known as "patron ma," or "better half," who are able to make provision for the waste and protection of their bodies in the way of clothing and food. Still, ought these young men to be left to the chances of parental or domestic affection? All are not equally fortunate.

What shall we do with those whose dependence is precarious? They do not admit of any utilitarian disposition. In carnal countries they could be eaten as a substitute for veal; their bodies would also make excellent fertilizers for sterile lands, but the prejudices of a Christian people would revolt at this solution of the problem. A certain number could be employed as lay figures in shop windows to exhibit clothes on, but the tailors might not have confidence in them. Most of them could color meerschaums, but this business would produce little revenue.—What, then, shall be done? The tax now falls upon a few, and it ought to be distributed. We propose, therefore, a State Asylum for useless young men. An institution of this kind could be easily filled with those between the ages of eighteen and thirty, who should be grouped and associated together, so that the rude jostling and friction of the working world would not disturb their delicate nerves.

Here they could cultivate their man-taches, part their hair behind, and practice attitudes. In this resort, with a little enforced exercise to keep their circulation in a healthy state, with dolls to play with as a compensation for the absence of ladies' society these useless young men could be supported with ease and comfort, and all industrious people would be willing to pay the expense of this institution, rather than bear the painful solicitude in regard to the welfare of these superfluous members of society. When provision has been made by the State for idiots, for insane, poor, aged, and crippled, is it not astonishing that asylums have never been erected for a still more helpless class? Let this philanthropic enterprise be started at once.—Watertown Reformer.

ROMANCE OF THE NEEDLE.

"What a wonderful thing is this matter of sewing! It began in Paradise, and was the earliest fruit of the Fall. Amid the odor of flowers, and by the meandering streams, and under the shade of the dark green foliage, the cowering forms of the guilty progenitors of our race bowed in anguish and shame, as they took the first lessons in the art which has ever since been the mark of servitude or sorrow. And yet the curse has not been without its blessing. "The needle with the thimble has done more for man than the needle of the compass. The needlework of the Tabernacle is the most ancient record of the art. Early used to adorn the vestments of the priests, it was honored by God himself, and became a type of beauty and holiness. "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold; she shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework." The magnificence of kingly pomp, the imposing spectacle of religion or wealth, the tribute of honor to the great, the charm of dignified society, the refined attractions of beauty are dependent upon the needle."—Christian Intelligencer.

CALVINISM.

The Tablet, a New York Roman Catholic paper, has the following remarks on Calvinism:

"It cannot be denied that Calvin was the great man of the Protestant rebellion. But for him, Luther's movement would, probably, have died out with himself and associates. Calvin organized it, gave it form and consistency, and his spirit has sustained it to this day. If Luther preceded him, it is still by his name rather than Luther's that the rebellion should be called, and the only form of Protestantism that still shows any signs of life and vigor is unquestionably Calvinism. It is Calvinism that sustains Methodism, that gives what little life it has to Lutheranism, and that prevents a very general return of Anglicans to the bosom of the church. It is hardly too much to say that no greater heresiarch than John Calvin has ever appeared, or a more daring, subtle, adroit, or successful enemy of the church of God. Calvinists, too, are the hardest of all the enemies of the truth to overcome and bring back to the truth, for, like their master, they believe only in might, and disregard all justice and mercy."

CHRISTIANS HELP ONE ANOTHER!—A teacher in one of the Southern States was sitting at the window of her room watching two negroes loading goods into a cart. One of them was disposed to shirk; the other stopped, and, looking sharply at the lazy one, said, "Sam, do you expect to go to heaven?" "Yes." "Then take hold and lift!"