

The Family Circle.

WHAT IS LIFE?

- I.
 - A little crib beside the bed,
 - A little face above the spread,
 - A little frock behind the door,
 - A little shoe upon the floor.
 - II.
 - A little lad with dark brown hair,
 - A little blue-eyed face and fair;
 - A little lane that leads to school,
 - A little pencil, slate and rule.
 - III.
 - A little blithesome winsome maid,
 - A little hand within his laid;
 - A little cottage, acres four,
 - A little old-time household store.
 - IV.
 - A little family gathering round;
 - A little turf heaped, tear-dewed mound;
 - A little added to his soil;
 - A little rest from hardest toil.
 - V.
 - A little silver in his hair;
 - A little stool and easy chair;
 - A little night of Earth-lit gloom;
 - A little cottage to the tomb.
- C. Stein in *The Lutheran Observer*.

KATRINA AND KATINKA.

Once on a time—no matter when—in a certain beautiful city—no matter where—there lived two lovely twin sisters, with the brightest eyes, and the cunningest little roly-poly figures, and the slenderest ears with the softest pink satin lining, and the spryest motions imaginable. They were brunettes in complexion, with white breasts and tail-tips, as they were kittens. Katrina and Katinka were their names, if I remember rightly—maybe I don't, but anyhow they might have had those names, which to my thinking, are very pretty and appropriate for kittens.

Well, these same twin pussies were singularly good to each other. They never called names, or scratched, or spat in each other's pretty faces, or pulled each other's little smellers, or quarrelled over their meals. They were so marvellously alike that it was already difficult to tell them apart; and when they slept, as they always did, hugged close in each other's arms, you couldn't have told, to save you, where one kitten left off and the other kitten began.

They not only slept, ate and played together, but as they grew older, took their strolls for health and recreation, and their mouse-hunts, in the same close and loving companionship. They were very curious and wide-awake little bodies, and liked to see all they could of the great, busy world; so every pleasant afternoon, when there was much driving and walking up and down the fine street on which they lived, they could be seen strolling down the long walk to the gate—always exactly side by side, "neck and neck," as the horse people say—as even in their pace, and as perfectly matched in their action, as ever were a pair of trained ponies in Hyde Park. Reaching the gate, they would pause and stand quite still for a half hour or so, gravely gazing through the palings at the passers—pedestrians, equestrians, and drivers of fast horses, like a pair of dear little brigadiers reviewing their brigades marching by. Then with the air of having discharged a public duty to the entire satisfaction of the community, they would wheel exactly together, and again precisely neck and neck, and tail and tail, trot gently homeward.

So they lived on, and for each other, almost as much united as if they had been a pair of small feline female, Siamese twins—amiable, loving and virtuous, and grew in knowledge and stature up to comely young adulthood. At last it happened that a very interesting event occurred to the twin sisters at precisely the same time—they became happy mothers—were blessed with three or four fine kittens a-piece. But alas! before the little strangers had got fairly to feel their legs—before they had got their eyes open, all, save one, mysteriously disappeared from each nest. It was one fatal morning, when the twin sisters had slipped out of their happy attic apartment for a little air—to take their "constitutional" in a trot down the long gravel walk, to see how the world would look to them now they were mothers—that this kidnapping occurred. When they returned to their families, they found them strangely thinned out; but they were mothers for all that, and did not seem to fret much, or abate their material pride a jot.

You see the ruling power in the human household in which they were domesticated, and who was to them as a providence, had ordered a little Hydrophaty for their poor, feeble, sprawling, blind darlings, beginning with what is called in water-cures "the heroic treatment," a cold plunge; and it didn't agree with them—it never does with any but the healthy and hardy patients; so it was they never came back. But under the blue waves they sleep well, though never a mew or a pur comes bubbling up to the surface to tell the spot where they lie on beds of tangled sea-grass. "Requiescat in pace!"—as old tombstones say.

The next mournful event in this true family history, was the untimely death of Katrina's one darling. This had proved to be but a frail flower of kittenhood; very pretty she was—"too sweet to live," people said. Her constitution was defective, her nervous system was extremely delicate. Before she was a week old, she had something alarmingly like a fit of catalepsy.—Suddenly, while imbibing nourishment, with her fond mother purring over her, and two or three children looking on in smiling sympathy, she gave a piteous wild mew, rolled over on her back and stuck up her

little legs, and laid out her little tail stiff as a poker! On the ninth day of her little life, she opened her blinking blue eyes on this great wonderful world, in which she had as good a right to be as you or I; but she didn't seem to like the looks of things for she soon closed those small eyes again, and never opened them more. Life was evidently too hard a conundrum for her poor, weak little brain, and she gave it up.

Of course Katrina was greatly afflicted, but she did not abandon herself utterly to grief. Had not her sister a kitten left? and had not they two always had everything in common? So as soon as the sympathetic children had buried her dead out of her sight, under a lilac bush, she went straightway to Katinka, and with her full consent, began to divide with her the duties and joys of maternity. All three cuddled down together in one nest—from mamma or auntie, master Catkin took nourishment, just as it suited his whim or convenience, and as you might suppose, he grew and thrived astonishingly. So equal and perfect was this partnership in the kitten, that it was impossible for a stranger to tell which of the two cats was the real mother. One day all three were brought down to the parlor to amuse some visitors. Both mamma and auntie seemed equally nervous about having the baby handled, and presently one of them caught it by the neck, the cat's usual, immemorial way of transporting her young, and started with it for the attic; when to the surprise and immense amusement of all present, the other caught hold of the tail, and so the two bore it away in triumph.

After this I am afraid the children gave the little kitten rather more travelling than she liked. It was such fun to see the two anxious cats following him, mewing, and at the first chance catching him up and lugging him home in that absurd manner! Generally the real, certain true mother seized on the head, but sometimes she was magnanimous enough to yield the post of honor to the aunt, and take to the tail herself.

So things went on for a few weeks, and then there happened to this estimable cat-family another sad event—for this is a tragedy I am writing, though you may not have suspected it—Katinka died! What of, has never yet been decided—physicians differed about it, and the coroner could not make it out. But this much is certain, Katinka died. The grief of Katrina was and is very affecting to behold. She mopes, she mews, and her slender tail, which she used to carry erect with such a jaunty air, droops dolefully. She takes no longer the "constitutional" trot down the walk to the front gate. Life seems to grow dull and wearisome to her, and the pleasures of mouse-hunting and tree-climbing appear to have lost their zest. If she remembers at all the halcyon period when much of her precious time was spent in a dizzy round of gayety, in a swift pursuit of a ball of cotton, or a futile pursuit of her own tail, it is in sad wonder that she could ever have been so merry and so thoughtless. She grows thin, neglects her toilet, and often refuses food—and when the children offer her catnip, she turns languidly away. If she were acquainted with Shakespeare, she would doubtless say—"Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?" "Throw physic to Bosc and Jowler—'Tis none of it!"

Friendly cat-neighbors call in occasionally, but they cannot console her—all the petting of the household fails thus far to make her cheery and playful as once she was. She is fed on the very "mille of human kindness" but grief has licked the cream off.

She seems to find her only consolation in her care and affection for the motherless catkin, and in his fondness for her. I am sorry to say that he does not show a very deep sense of his loss—perhaps he is too young to realize it. His good aunt seems sufficient for all his needs, and he thrives finely, is fat and jolly, and full of all kittenish pranks and mischievous tricks. Poor Katrina will have a hard time with him, I fear as he is so petted and indulged. Such a lazy rascal as he is, too—don't earn the salt of his porridge—that is, if he took it salted; and though quite old enough to "go on the war-path," has never yet killed his mouse, or brought home a rat's scalp, or a ground-squirrel's brush, or as much as a feather from a tomtit's wing. Ah, of all the darlings in the world, an aunty's darling is the likeliest to be spoiled.

This is all I know about this curious cat-family. I hope, dear children, that my true story may not sadden you. All I can say in a way of a moral to my little story is: How beautiful is love! Even when shown in the fortunes and sorrows of cats and kittens, how beautiful is love!—*Bishop Hall*.

CHILDREN A BLESSING.

I remember a great man coming into my house at Waltham, and seeing my children standing in the order of their age and stature, said: "These are they that make rich men poor." But he straightway received this answer: "Nay, my lord, these are they that make a poor man rich; for there is not one of these whom we could part with for all your wealth." It is easy to observe, for the most part, that none are so gripple and hardfisted as the childless; whereas those who, for the maintenance of large families, are inured to frequent disbursements, find such experience of Divine Providence in the faithful management of their affairs, as that they lay out with more cheerfulness what they receive. And wherein their care must be abated when God takes it from them to himself, their faith gives them ease in casting their burden upon him, who hath more right to it, since our children are more his than our own. He that feedeth the young ravens, can he fall the best of his creatures when they cry to Him?—*Bishop Hall*.

TEMPERANCE JOTTINGS.

We called in, the other day, at a handsome residence to talk with a refined Christian lady about her husband, who has become a sorrowful wreck through the agency of strong drink. We asked her what first led her husband to tippling, for we had once known him as very abstinent. She replied: "He first began to use it at dinner for dyspepsia. The doctor recommended him to use wine or Bourbon as a tonic for poor digestion. He got to liking his medicine, and it has made him a drunkard."

That careless physician who put that temptation in that poor man's way is partly responsible for his ruin. There are enough other safe remedies for poor digestion without putting the dangerous glass into the hands of a man who may have latent appetite for the accursed thing. The physician who uses alcoholic medicines freely is the partner of the grog-seller in the manufacture of drunkards.

A gentleman whom we had labored hard to reform went back to his cups, and had a frightful "spree." I said to his weeping wife: "Why did your husband fall again after his solemn promise to me and to God?" She answered: "His health is not good, and the doctor says he must keep ale in the house, and use a bottle every day." "Madam," we replied, "the doctor who will put an alcoholic bottle into your husband's hands deserves to be kicked out of your doors." She took the alarm. The ale was flung out of the cellar, and the man reformed. He is now a good church member, and a son of temperance. A good substitute can be found for nearly every alcoholic medicine. Alcohol cures but little; it covers up a great deal.

Ought total abstinence to be made a necessary condition to church membership? This question is much agitated in many quarters. My own rule is, never to admit a man to the church (however genuine his conversion) who has ever used liquor freely, without his solemn pledge to abstain entirely. To all persons we would not make this pledge an essential step to an admission to the church of Christ. But physical appetite must be met with physical restraints. A Christian who tampers with stimulating poisons as a beverage is as likely to be overcome as any other man. And if a former tippler professes spiritual conversion and yet refuses to make a vow against his old enemy, he is not to be trusted in the church of God. He is secreting a "contraband" lust in his heart, and is pretty sure to fall. One-half of all the inebriates with whom we have labored for five years past were once members of Christian churches! What a warning in this fact to pastors and church officers.—*Rev. T. L. Cuyler*.

MISPLACED AMUSEMENTS.

Without either approving or condemning any specific amusement, without attempting to decide what is and what is not harmless, we may be permitted to direct attention to one tendency of the times. This spirit is penetrating our churches and coloring our Christianity. The demand is that our sanctuaries, and our Sabbath-schools, and our prayer meetings should be amusing. An attractive is the word used. Opera music is furnished in the sanctuary. It attracts. It fills the pews. The Sabbath-school must be attractive. The children must be amused. Sabbath-school concerts and anniversaries must be spiced with witty anecdotes. And prayer meetings must be made attractive by holding them in rooms furnished with the apparatus for popular games. A brother in the ministry described to me the furnishing of a room for a Young Men's Christian Association in one of our cities. Along each side of the room were tables for playing dominoes, backgammon and checkers—and around these young men sat absorbed in their games till the moment for the prayer-meeting came, and then the tables were cleared and worship began. Now in the name of all that is proper, and serious, and sacred, we protest against the combination. If dominoes, and backgammon, and checkers are innocent and proper—and we do not deny that they are—yet we contend that they are not the best immediate preparation for religious worship. We may be old-fashioned, probably are, but the experience which has been most profitable to us have been those to which we have gone from the closet and from our knees. We always regret an invitation to tea on the evening of the prayer-meeting. It is not easy to turn immediately from the chit-chat of a social company to the solemn worship of God. Can these young men turn at once, and without leaving their places, from an exciting game to acts of prayer and praise? Is this the fitting preparation for an approach to the presence of Him before whom angels veil their faces?

It seems that a Young Men's Christian Association has been attempting to make religion attractive by alternating the prayer-meetings with socials. The result is given in the following statement, taken from the *Springfield Republican*:

"The Young Men's Christian Association of North Adams became a thing of the past on Monday last. Its socials were always well attended, which makes it a mystery to some how it could possibly be given up. But the prayer-meetings have been so few, and thin—that the same wondering minds, have desired to know how they could be kept up."

But we hail it as a good omen, that a counter tendency is awakened. There is a reaction at least begun. The alarm is felt and good men are sounding it. At the recent anniversaries at Andover an admirable essay was read on the subject. The writer took the ground that it is essentially vicious to make pleasure the object of life, though the kind of pleasure in itself may be perfectly innocent. The present demand is for temperate indulgence. What is most needed now is to restrain rather than to gratify. He believed that all this vast ado which is made now-a-days by certain Chris-

tian men about the great need of furnishing amusements for our youth is fearfully increasing the very evils which they think to counteract. By so much as we appeal to a love of amusements, already too much gratified, do we awaken the sensuous nature, deaden the moral feelings, and thus make it all the more difficult to reach the heart by religious appeals.

But, however this may be—if any doubt whether there is an excess in the direction—no reverent Christian can question the propriety of keeping our amusements distinct and separate, both in time and place, from our religious services. "Amusements offered as a bait" to the Sabbath-school, the prayer-meeting, or other religious appliances, are modern inventions. It is an attempt to beguile men into the service of Christ. I know of nothing in the example or teachings of Christ or His apostles to warrant a resort to any trickery. But does not Paul confess to the Corinthians—"Being crafty I caught you with guile"? No, but he puts these words, so we understand him, into the lips of an opponent as a false charge against himself. Let us not, brethren, lay ourselves open to such an accusation, not falsely, but truthfully made.—*The Watchman and Reflector*.

THE POWER OF RELIGIOUS TRAINING.

A distinguished superintendent of public instruction in one of the New England States propounded, a few years ago, the following question to a large number of teachers: "What proportion of such children as you have had under your charge, could, in your opinion, be so educated and trained, that their existence on going out of this world, would be a benefit and not a detriment, an honor and not a shame to society, provided these children should all frequent schools, taught by teachers of high intellectual and moral acquirements, during ten months each year, from the age of four to sixteen?" From a large number of replies thus obtained, we select the following striking testimonies:

Mr. GRISCOLM, after an experience of forty years, testifies: "That ninety-five per cent would be supporters of the moral welfare of the community; that nineteen-twentieths of the immoralities with which society is afflicted would be eradicated from the soil of our social institutions, and that not one per cent would be found irreclaimable." Mr. SOLOMON ADAMS says: "I would confidently expect, that ninety-nine out of a hundred would become good members of society, the supporters of law, order, justice, truth, and all righteousness." Rev. T. ANBOR witnesses as follows: "I think the work of training up the whole community to intelligence and virtue would soon be accomplished, as completely as any human end can be accomplished by human means." Mr. F. A. ADAMS says: "In the course of my experience, in teaching between three and four hundred boys during the last ten years, I have been acquainted with but two, in regard to whom I should not feel strong confidence of success, according to the proposed experience." Miss C. E. BEXCHER bears the following emphatic testimony: "I do not believe that one—not a single one would fail of proving a respectable member of society; nay more, I believe that every one would, at the close of life, find admission into the world of endless peace and love."

This testimony embraces children of both sexes, from different parts of our country, and extends over the last half century. The teachers were all believers in human depravity, and based their hopes for counteracting its demoralizing and ruinous influences, on such a degree of moral and religious training as is imparted in many of the public schools of New England, and which might and ought to be imparted in them everywhere else. If these teachers expected such glorious results from that degree of religious training which may be properly expected in all our schools, what would their expectations have been, if the question propounded had included besides faithful family training, efficient Sabbath-school instruction, thorough catechization, and constant pastoral supervision? Who can doubt that their united testimony would have been, that the power of religious training, brought to bear steadily and in the highest efficiency, during the formative period of life, in the family, in the school, and in the church, by parents, teachers, and pastors, would be sufficiently great, to rescue every child from the downward course of iniquity and shame, and induce it to enter and pursue the path of virtue and honor, leading to eternal life.—*The Lutheran Observer*.

"IF I SHOULD DIE BEFORE I WAKE."

"Mother, every night, when I go to bed, I say, 'Now I lay me'; and do you know, mamma, though I am four years old, I never thought what it meant until Fanny Grey died? I asked nurse if Fanny died before she waked; and she said, 'Yes.' She went to bed well, and had a spasm in the night, and died before she knew anything at all."

"Now, mother," continued Rena, "I want you to tell me about 'Now I lay me,' so that, when I say it, I may think just what it means."

"Well, Rena," said her mother, "I shall be glad to tell you. What does it mean when you say, 'Now I lay me down to sleep'?"

"Oh! that means, mother, that I am just going to lie down in my bed, to go to sleep, till morning."

"Well, then, as you lie down to sleep, what prayer do you offer to God?"

"I pray the Lord my soul to keep." I want the Lord to take care of my soul while I am asleep, and to take care of me, all over, mother. But, mother, if I should die before I wake, would the Lord be taking care of me then? Now it seemed to me, when Fanny died that God did not take care of her that night; and so she died."

"Oh, no, Rena! God did take care of her. The little verses says, 'If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take'; so you see God took little Fanny's soul to himself; and when she awoke, she was in the arms of the blessed Jesus. Now Rena, when you say, 'Now I lay me,' I want you to think in this way: 'Now I am going to bed and to sleep, and I want the Lord to take care of me. If I am not a good child, and do not pray to God, ought I to ask him or expect him to take care of me? Let me lie down feeling that I am in the Lord's care, and if I should die before I wake, that still I am the Lord's child; and I pray that he may take my soul to dwell with him.'"

"O mother! I will try and remember. Why, I used to say it slow, and clasp my hands, and shut my eyes; and yet I did not think about it. Thank you, mother dear. Please hear me to night when I say my prayers."

Ab, little children! are there not a great many, who, like Rena, say their prayers without thinking what it means?—more words, with no meaning in them? God cannot listen to such prayers. They are not for Him "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid."

Think of what I have written about little Rena, when you say, "Now I lay me" to-night; and I pray that God will watch over you, waking and sleeping.

A TRUE STORY.

"Once upon a time," as stories were generally begun in my childhood days, there lived two little sisters in the town of T—. They loved each other dearly, as sisters and brothers should always do. As they were playing one evening on the pavement before their father's door, the little one, whom we will call "Brown-eyes," threw a pebble, which, unfortunately, hit the elder sister, whom we will call "Blue-eyes." Several gentlemen standing near, seeing the accident, expected to hear a loud scream, and an angry voice saying, "You ugly thing; I'll just tell mother! You did it a purpose—I know you did—you mean, ugly thing; and so on, as angry children will talk. But these gentlemen heard nothing of the kind. For a moment little Blue-eyes stood, ready to cry—for to be hit by a pebble hurts. As I said, Blue-eyes stood for a moment looking at poor, dismayed Brown-eyes, then she ran to her, threw her arms round her, and said, 'Don't cry, little sister; I know you didn't mean to hit me. Kiss me, dear,' and the sisters kissed and embraced each other fondly. The gentlemen who saw the little ones told their father of it adding, 'We never saw anything like that before.' Alas! and is sisterly and brotherly love and forbearance so rare a thing that the loving sisters' conduct should call forth a remark like that? Dear children, do be kind and loving to all, but especially to your sisters and brothers, whom God has given to you to love. Try to be like Jesus, who not only loves those who love him, but he loves his enemies. He died that his enemies might live.

COULDN'T FIND THE VERDICT.

At a recent session of one of the courts of South Carolina an entire negro jury was empanelled. A case was brought before them, the witnesses examined, and the attorneys made their respective arguments. The Judge, after laying down the law and recapitulating the testimony, gave the papers into the hands of the foreman, a rather intelligent looking darkey, with instructions, as soon as they found a verdict, to bring it in without delay.

Thirty minutes or more elapsed, when the jury returned, headed by the foreman, and stood before the judge.

As the foreman appeared to hesitate, the judge inquired:

"Mr. Foreman, have you found a verdict?"

"No, Massa Judge, we habent found 'em nobow," replied the ebony jurymen.

"It's a very plain case," said the judge.

"Can't help it, Massa, couldn't see it," replied ebony again.

"On what grounds?" inquired the judge.

"We didn't look into the grounds, Massa Judge," replied the foreman; "de ossifer didn't take us out into de grounds, but he took us into a room and locked us in, an' tole us when we found de verdict he would leave us out. So we began to find de verdict, and search ebry nook, corner, crevis, an' ebry ting dere was in dat room, but we found no verdict—no noffin ob de kind dar."

A BEAUTIFUL INCIDENT.

A naval officer being at sea in a dreadful storm, his lady, who was sitting in the cabin near him, and filled with alarm for the safety of the vessel, was so surprised at his composure and serenity, that she cried out—

"My dear, are you not afraid? How is it possible you can be calm in such a dreadful storm?"

He rose from his chair lashed to the deck, supporting himself by a pillar of the bed-place, drew his sword, and pointing to the breast of his wife, exclaimed—

"Are you not afraid?"

She instantly answered, "No."

"Why?" said the officer.

"Because," rejoined the lady, "I know that this sword is in the hands of my husband, and he loves me too well to hurt me."

"Then," said he, "remember, I know in whom I believe; and that He holds the winds in His fists, and the water in the hollow of His hands."

Regard hypocrisy as the most odious sin in the sight of God and men. To have no holiness is bad enough, but to pretend it when we have it, not, is double impiety.