

MUSINGS and MEDITATIONS

By DOG TOBY

THE CHILDREN'S REST.

WE are told that the thousandth baby to enter the children's Rest at the Christchurch Exhibition received a silver mug suitably inscribed. What the suitable inscription was we are not told; probably it was a verse or two of the song "They left the baby on the shore, a thing which they had never done before." The system of establishing places where we can leave what the papers in their advertising columns euphemistically term "encumbrances" is one capable of almost indefinite expansion. Why, for instance, when ministers go for a holiday cruise to the Islands or the Sounds, or to various "conferences" in other countries, should they not have a crèche provided for them where they can leave their various bills to be cared for, and coddled in their absence, and called for on their return? Some ministerial parents might forget to call for their offspring, or they might lose the ticket, or the different parliamentary babies might get mixed and call for a second judgment of Solomon to decide the true ownership. This would only add to the excitement of life for the members of our House of Representatives, and a Home of Rest for most of our recent legislative enactments, could not fail to be welcomed by the community as a whole. In social life some place where we could leave inconvenient companions to be called for would be much patronised. The married man could leave his mother-in-law, and unmarried couples could drop the often inconvenient chaperon. The astute confidence man might leave his victim in one of these halls of rest whilst he himself walked round the corner with his victim's watch and purse, and the gifts or mugs to the inmates would in such cases be singularly appropriated.

At Easter time, when our thoughts are turned for a space to things beyond this world, many of us will let memory wander back to the day when we saw our love-lump blown about the night, and angel arms caught up our little one and carried it upwards to the Children's Rest. There is a pathos in the death of little children such as there is in nothing else. Their love whilst they were with us was so entirely free from all self-seeking, so trustful, and so confiding. Where shall we find the like in the loves and affections of maturer lives? More intense, more conscious, more knowingly capable of sacrifice, the love of wedded life may be; but it is the look of pure affection shining out of wildered eyes that we find in childhood, and nowhere else. Who can read the child's mind? Who knows what it has cost the baby soul to keep back the tears when it has had to surrender some new found joy, because mother would be so vexed? For children are so eagerly anxious that we should share their pleasures with them, they bring us all their baby treasures that we, too, may share in their finds. When baby has picked up some particularly precious morsel on the floor, or unearthed it from the place where we thought it had been so carefully hidden, how gleefully does it run to mother that she may have some too. In this world, with its clouding cares we too seldom know the angel influences that are with

us till we see the white wings lessening up the skies. What it means to watch by that little cot, when the little feet that used to patter over the house are still; when the parched lips that used to lip our names are faintly moaning between their gasps for breath; when we would give our all to be able to call our little one back to health, and our thoughts keep wandering to the time when the baby arms were round us, and the baby voice was calling—only a mother's heart can tell.

Ere the soul loosed from its last ledge of life.
Her little face peered round with anxious eyes,
Then, seeing all the old faces, dropped content,
The mystery dilated in her look,
Which on the darkening deathground, faintly caught
Some likeness of the angel shining near.
And all in her babe beauty forth she went,
Her budding spring of life in tiny leaf,
Her faint dawn whitened in the perfect day.
Hearing her life-scroll folded, without stain,
And only three words written on it,—two
Our names! Ah may they plead for us in heaven!

And Easter comes to bring us the message of hope, the message that the divine within us is immortal; and the little one in going to heaven has but opened a pathway thither, down which goodness comes streaming into our own souls. And when in after years we stand by the grave of the babe we lost in other days, should not we feel that in this stainless life taken from us, our sin could blight or sorrow fade, we have really one of the most precious gifts that God can give—the memory of unselfish love to make us less self-seeking in our lives, the memory of innocent purity to make us less wedded to the baser passions of mankind. The life has returned to God who gave it, and returned as He gave it, unspotted by the world. We have a weary way to travel, seeing the sights and exhibitions of this life. Often will we be fain to stop and rest, but we are hurried on from corridor to corridor, seeing much, finding interest in little, till our day of weary sight-seeing is done, and we pass once more through the gates to a wider and fresher world. And as we make with tired feet and stained robes, towards the portals that shall open to us the great beyond, shall we not feel thankful that while we were wandering gloomily and wearily among the maze corridors of life, God called our little one, in all its stainless purity, and took it to Himself to the bright and fearless Children's Rest?

Medical Hints.

Evils of Smoking.—Tobacco, says Dr. C. Stanford Read, tends to produce anaemia, but up to the age of forty much excess of tobacco may be indulged in without permanent harm. Nevertheless, excessive smoking, especially of cigarettes, causes "tobacco heart," "tobacco blindness," and sleeplessness, and is prejudicial to the efficient working of the intellectual faculties.

The Sick-Room.—In preparing a sick-room let the floor and woodwork be wiped with a damp cloth—not scrubbed, unless some hours elapse before the patient is moved into it. See that the windows and doors open and close without any noise. If a fire has not been in the room for some time, light it some hours before the patient is moved in; if a fire is not needed, see that there is a clear passage up the chimney.

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