

# The Family Circle

## EARLY AND LATE

Go to bed early, wake up with joy;  
Go to bed late, cross girl or boy.

Go to bed early, ready for play;  
Go to bed late, moping all day.

Go to bed early, no pains or ills;  
Go to bed late, doctors and pills.

Go to bed early, grow very tall;  
Go to bed late, stay very small.

— St. Nicholas.

## AN OLD FRIEND

'I hear old John Smith has been taken bad,' said a burly farmer to his wife, on his return from market one cold winter's day. 'I went in to have a glass at the Black Swan,' he continued, 'and Fisher, who was there at the time, told me about him.'

'Indeed! I'm sorry for that,' said his wife, who knew some of the Smiths fairly well. 'Do you know what ails him?'

'I fancy it is that 'ere influenza; it's just rife all the country through, and keeps the doctors that busy they don't know however to get the work done.'

'Has he got it bad, I wonder?' Mrs. Webster asked, as she stirred the fire into a comfortable blaze, and set on the kettle to boil.

'That I don't know, but he is at his best not very strong, and besides he must be getting on in years now. I should say he is close upon seventy.'

'Well, yes, he must be quite that; and it's a serious matter, is this complaint with the old folks. He is comfortably off, and that's one blessing, for he can be well looked after. But when a man's time is come he is bound to go, no matter what care he gets.'

'Aye, and that's the truth,' said Webster, with a sigh. 'Man's days are but as grass, as the psalm says. We're here to-day—gone to-morrow, for life is wonderful short.'

'They did use to say,' continued Mrs. Webster, after a pause, 'as old John was a Catholic in his young days. I believe there would be some truth in it, for his brother James, he was of that way of thinking; he lies buried in the Catholic cemetery.'

'I've never seen John come to our church that I know of, but he may have gone when I wasn't there. Anyway, he never goes to chapel. I know there used to be a Catholic priest who used to call on him at times, but the missis had no liking for him, and didn't make him none too welcome, and, by Jove, she's the master there by long odds. I am not the only one that says so. I'll step over and ask how the old man is to-morrow.'

John Smith, the man in question, was found to be dangerously ill, and not much hope was entertained of his recovery. It was true he was a Catholic, but, like too many others, he had become so absorbed in business and money-making that religion had in time come to be quite a secondary consideration; he seemed to quite forget that Almighty God had any claim upon him at all.

He prospered in his business and made money. Not content with what he had, he married the widow of a publican, and took on the public house. His wife was a Protestant, and no lover of Catholics, but John, blinded by the glitter of the fortune he saw before him turned his back on his faith, married her, and gave up church-going altogether. It was a very sad business; no remonstrance of priest or friend had any effect. He was too busy and too prosperous to worry about his soul.

So, when years had passed away, we find him stricken down with his last sickness, with no Catholic near him, and in the hands of a wife, who would sooner have welcomed her worst enemy than have willingly allowed a priest to cross the threshold of her door. To have asked for the priest would have been useless, and he had not the courage to try and send. He knew he was in danger, and had but little chance; and his conscience, silenced so long, seemed to wake and rouse him to his state.

Almighty God was giving him a good chance. He had no peace by day or night. What would he not have given to get a priest now, he who had refused for years to attend his religion. And someone had told the priest of the parish about him, and he had called,

ed, not once, but two or three times, but he had been sternly and rudely refused admittance, and told he was not wanted, and it was useless to go anymore. There was nothing for it but to pray that God would give the wretched man time to make his peace.

And poor John, miserable beyond words, and weak and suffering, turned to Almighty God in prayer.

It was not too late.

In a parish some little distance away, there lived an old priest who had known John in his early days, and in some providential way he heard of his illness, and of the refusals Father B— had met with in trying to see him. He determined, with God's help, to get to him. There must be no delay, and he started at once.

With him he took the holy oils and the Blessed Sacrament, and he got himself up in such a disguise that none could recognise him or guess his errand. He took a trap to the village, where he put up; and then made his way to the public house.

He had to wait some time, but at last his chance came. Mrs. Smith, by some good fortune, was out, and Father G— found the daughter a far less severe woman.

'I was so grieved to hear of Mr. Smith's bad attack—I only knew to-day,' he said, 'and came straight away to inquire, for I'm a very old friend of John's. Is there any hope that I might see him? If he is not too weak, maybe he would take no harm from seeing an old friend?'

'He's a bit easier this afternoon, thank you,' said the girl. 'If you will wait, I will just see if he is awake, and if he will see you.'

She went upstairs and soon came down again and took the unsuspected 'old friend' to see the sick man. Fortunately, it was a busy day in the house, and the girl having plenty to do, was glad to leave these two alone.

'Do you know me, John?' Father G— asked, as soon as they were to themselves. 'I'm Father G—.'

A feverish hand clasped his, and the poor man's eyes filled with tears. He did know him.

'Thank God, thank God,' he said. 'How did you know? Thank God for His goodness.'

He could say no more, for his voice failed him.

There was no time to be lost and there was much to be done. God alone knows all that was done for that soul in one short half-hour.

Guardian angels must have kept watch at the door of the sick-room, and kept away intruders, for no one came near to disturb them, and all the last Sacraments were given.

What a mercy it was and what a wonderful thing that a priest should have been able to get to him, surrounded as he was by the enemies of his faith! But, thank God, he was safe now, and Father G— left the house with his mission entirely unsuspected, and overjoyed with his success, and he left the soul he had found tortured with unrest and remorse of conscience, now reconciled to God and at peace.

How good God is!

Not many days after, John Smith passed away, peacefully, thanking God from his heart for His wonderful goodness, and His mercy and patience with him.—  
'Almanac of Apostleship of Prayer.'

## CHEERFULNESS

Be cheerful. It is trite advice to tell women to take each day as it comes, to avoid remorse over what is done and forebodings of what is to come, but it is no less valuable advice. Nervous prostration is seldom the result of present trouble or work, but of work and trouble anticipated. Mental exhaustion comes to those who look ahead and climb mountains before they arrive at them. Resolutely build a wall to-day and live within the enclosure. The past may have been hard, sad or wrong. It is over. The future may be like the past, but the woman who worries about it may not live to meet it. If she does she will bear it. The only thing with which she should concern herself is to-day, its sunshine, its air, its friend, its wholesome work, and perhaps its necessary sorrow.

## OUT OF HER CLASS

This is the sad case of a girl who failed to pass her examination for a scholarship. The mother of the disappointed pupil was asked by a friend whether her daughter had succeeded in running the gauntlet of the examiners. 'No,' was the reply, in mournful tones, 'Jinny didn't pass at all. Maybe, you won't believe, sir, but them examiners asked the poor girl about things that have happened years and years before she was born.'