

# The Family Circle

## BIRTHDAYS.

Oh, the sunshine of our birthdays  
Are the brightest days of all,  
For no cloud or lurking shadow  
O'er our young heads dare befall---  
Tender arms around us, kissing,  
Loving all our childish ways  
Yes, our birthdays in the springtime  
Are the sweetest of birthdays!

Yes, the summer of our birthdays  
And the joy that fills our heart:  
Golden dreams and love and laughter  
Of our life are all a part:  
Eyes like drops of dew that glisten,  
Smiles a glimpse of heaven's rays---  
Yes, our birthdays in the summer  
Are the happiest of birthdays!

Ah, the winter of our birthdays!  
The calm that rests upon our soul!  
We have braved all little trials,  
Now we reach life's truest goal,  
Should our dear ones all be near us,  
And their love be ours always,  
Then our birthdays in the winter  
Will be greatest of birthdays!

May God bless us on our birthdays!  
Every milestone which we see!  
May He keep us pure and holy  
Like a child at mother's knee:  
And, oh, Mary Queen of Heaven,  
When all birthdays pass away,  
Bring us to you, dearest Mother,  
For our last and great birthday.

## OSCAR HERO.

The dog Oscar, who died at the Wellington Zoo a week or two ago, had won his place by bravery and determination in the face of danger and privation. Oscar was the leader of the team of four dogs that the late Captain Mackintosh took south with him from McMurdo Sound in November, 1915. The task in hand was the laying of depots far into the interior, for the use of the party that Sir Ernest Shackleton was expected to lead across the Antarctic continent from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea. As a matter of fact, Sir Ernest Shackleton did not get started on his sledging journey owing to the crushing of his ship by the ice in the Weddell Sea. But Captain Mackintosh, who was in command at the Ross Sea end, could not know this, and the laying of the depots was the task for which he had been sent south.

The party that Captain Mackintosh took south consisted of six men and four dogs, with two sledges and very heavy loads of provisions and equipment. The snow surfaces were soft, the temperature was very low, and the loads were so large that much relaying had to be done. Men and dogs sank deep into the snow, and an advance of a mile in an hour often meant exhausting effort. The outward journey occupied nearly three months, and then, after laying the last depot at the foot of the Beardmore Glacier the party turned northward again. There was a man on the remaining sledge by this time, for Mr. Spencer Smith had developed scurvy, and was a helpless sufferer. Captain Mackintosh himself had scurvy also, and could do no more than struggle along. Presently he had to be carried. The food was running out, and the men were utterly wearied. A succession of raging blizzards threatened the whole party with the fate that overtook Captain Scott and his companions in 1912.

During the latter part of the homeward journey everything depended upon the four dogs. Oscar and

his mates did not fail. Struggling through snow and drift, often sinking deep in the soft surface, with little rest and scanty food, they helped the enfeebled men to drag the heavy loads. "If they will only last 80 degrees south we shall then have enough food to take them in," wrote one of the members of the party in his diary. "Then if the ship is in I guarantee they will live in comfort the remainder of their days." The dogs lasted. When they got back to the base they had covered 1561 miles in 150 days, and in all probability they had saved five lives. They certainly had made possible the laying of the depots that might have been essential to the safety of Sir Ernest Shackleton's party. "Without the aid of four faithful friends—Oscar, Con, Gummer, and Towser—the party could never have arrived back," said another of the explorers later. "Their endurance was fine. For three whole days at a time they had not a scrap of food, and this after a period on short rations. Though they were feeble towards the end of the trip their condition usually was good, and those who returned with them will ever remember the remarkable service they rendered."

So that was why Oscar for more than a year now has had a life of leisure and comfort at the Wellington Zoo. He had been promised a holiday for the rest of his life. The pity is that he did not live longer.

## GOOD EXAMPLE.

The following account was written by a soldier of the way he was brought back to the Church by the influence of a good companion in the ranks:—

One of the boys brought me back to the faith from which I had strayed for nine long years. This young man was in my own company, and for weeks I watched him, saw him kneel down every night and morning, make the sign of the cross, and say his prayers, saw him recite his beads at frequent intervals, saw him hurry to Mass early on Sunday morning, without waiting for his breakfast. All of these things impressed me, and the more I watched him the more my conscience annoyed me. During all this time plenty of opportunity was given to me to return to the Church. There were services every Sunday in both the Knights of Columbus and other buildings in the vicinity; there were even retreats and novenas; but somehow I lacked the courage. Finally, one Saturday afternoon I watched our young friend reading his prayer book, and when he arose I asked him where he was going, and he replied to confession. I told him I would like to go with him, but that I had been away entirely too long—nine years—to even think of going back. Naturally he was taken by surprise, for owing to my complete ignoring of the Catholic services he never dreamt that I was a Catholic. He asked me to sit beside him, and in a nice quiet way he brought me to my senses. He spoke of the wonderful opportunity that was being given to us at the camp to make our peace with God before being sent "over there" to meet what fate we knew not and he asked me if I had realised that I had failed to take advantage of this God-given privilege. He invited me to accompany him to the chaplain, and without any more hesitancy I made my confession. The next morning I went with this boy, and after the Mass I told my good friend with all sincerity that I would lead a good life from now on.

## NO CAUSE FOR ALARM.

There were several people in the shop when the stranger entered, and so he addressed them at large: "Any of you drive up here in a trap?" "Yes," said Farmer Crabbe, "I did. Why?" "An old gray horse in the trap?" "Yes; but—" "And an elderly lady on the seat?" "That's right; but—" "I suppose she can manage that old horse?" "Rather; I should just think she could! Why, she's drove him since he was a two-year-old." "Oh," said the stranger, "then it's all right. I merely asked because the gray

Consulting Rooms :  
Opp. Masonic Hotel,  
Napier



Visits  
Hastings Tuesdays.  
At Union Bank Chambers