

The Family Circle

"THE LITTLE FLOWER."

Oh, Little Flower that bloomed in heavenly peace
Behind the cloister walls of quaint Lisieux,
The gardens of Child Jesus hold to-day
No fairer or more youthful flower than you.
At thy first breath a holy mother prayed
That God might keep you from the world away,
And in His holy service find a place
Where you would labor lovingly and stay.
In thy own childish heart that yearning grew,
And Little Jesus was your playmate then;
His infant smile divine shone forth on you
From every flower that decked your native glen.
And when at last the golden morning dawned,
The sweetest moment of your life, yet young,
In great humility and holy joy
You nursed the infant Jesus on your tongue.
And then to Rome, where at the Pontiff's feet,
You prayed as though your pure young heart would break,
And begged the Holy Father let you go—
A prisoner of Carmel—for God's sake.
The convent gates were opened and you bade
A farewell to the world you scarcely knew,
And found the better, happier world within—
Your lonely cell in quiet old Lisieux.
Ah, who can tell what secret joy you found
In all your solitude and suffering there?—
A little flower that grew more beautiful
Through pain-racked hours of sacrifice and prayer.
But hush! While yet the holy Sisters keep
Their faithful vigil, ere thy young life closes,
Your whispered promise comes—"Upon the world
From Heaven I'll send a shower of wondrous roses."
Your virgin life was God's—His pathway yours;
And every sorrow was to you a gain
That brought you nearer to your heavenly home,
And kept your young soul free from sin or stain.
Fair Saint of France! the Christian world rejoices,
And suppliant hearts are turned to thee this hour;
The lowly and afflicted love and honor
Teresa of Child Jesus—Little Flower.
And in the heavenly gardens, rich and fragrant,
The Infant's smile shines forth again on you,
For Jesus is a Child and you are still
His Little Flower that once bloomed in Lisieux.
—FRANK HARKIN, in the *Irish Weekly*.

THE ART OF TALKING.

What are the great faults of conversation? Want of ideas, want of words, want of manners are the principal ones, I suppose you think. I don't doubt it, but I will tell you what I have found spoil more good talks than anything else—long arguments on special points between people who differ on the fundamental principles upon which these points depend.

No men can have satisfactory relations with each other until they have agreed on certain "ultima" of belief not to be disturbed in ordinary conversation, and unless they have sense enough to trace the secondary questions depending upon these ultimate beliefs to their source.

In short, just as a written constitution is essential to the best social order, so a code of finalities is a necessary condition of profitable talk between two persons. Talking is like playing on the harp; there is as much in laying the hand on the strings to stop their vibrations as in twanging them to bring out their music.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

MARY IN THE CATACOMBS.

The Virgin Mother of Jesus is no pagan idea, no Christian Demeter or Astarte. From the earliest days of Christianity, in the Scriptures, in the first essays of scientific theology, in the maiden efforts of Christian art and poetry, we trace the affectionate veneration of the Christian world for the sweet Mother of the Redeemer. It is a spontaneous growth.

When in the course of the third century many of the family burial-places passed into the hands of the Church, the ecclesiastical authorities gladly chose for their decoration scenes in which she occupied the most prominent place. The furniture of the catacombs bears her venerated image. It is sculptured on the most imposing tombs, and when Christian piety forbade further interments in the catacombs, it gathered carefully all the art-traditions concerning the Mother of God and enshrined them lovingly in enduring mosaic on the walls of her favorite temple.

Far from being an idolatrous outgrowth, the early Christian art clings most timidly to the cycle of Gospel subjects, scarcely daring to introduce a detail foreign to the letter of Scripture. Its canons were formed at an early date, and have held their own, East and West, in all the subsequent centuries. The fury of the Iconoclast and the fanaticism of Islam did not avail to destroy or modify the sweet and dignified artistic type of the Virgin in Byzantine art.

In spite of the pagan trend of the Renaissance, the same type has preserved in the West all the sweet grace and tender wistful love with which the mediaeval Virgin in the catacombs, the mediaeval Master Dei of St. Luke, and the Madonnas of Raphael are the products of epochs wide apart, of different stages of culture and intellectual development. Yet they only differ in details of pose and execution, and Raphael himself would have been proud to take up and per-

fect the conception of the unknown artist of the Madonna and the Prophet Isaiah in the Catacomb of Priscilla.—The Right Rev. Thomas J. Shahan, D.D., in *Salve Regina*.

DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH.

It will always be lovingly remembered of Pope Pius X that he gladdened the hearts of millions of Catholics, who love St. Joseph, by increasing the liturgical honors with which the Saint's two feasts are celebrated. The words of the Pope have enhanced the tender gratitude and filial devotion of the whole Catholic world towards the Foster Father of Jesus, and Patron of the Universal Church.

In that intimate union of the Holy Family the Catholic heart loves to consider the interest and intercessory power with which St. Joseph is ever mindful of the workingman, living and dying. Living faith is always prompting in the individual soul some special holy affection and attachment. The thought of the carpenter doing hard work with his hands to provide for his loved ones the essentials of home life, and with his work done sinking to rest with his head pillowed on the Heart of his God, may here and there have much of legend interwoven with the meagre annals of the Gospel. Faithful hearts, however, for long ages have found solace and help in this ennobling thought; they have done hard work more cheerily and more patiently, and have faced eternity with greater peace, because they have added the name of Joseph to their invocation of Jesus and Mary.

All such Catholics will know how to use the month of March, St. Joseph's month, with its beautiful and solemn days of Holy Week and of the Annunciation, with special thought and hope that he who cared for our Brother, Jesus, and our Mother, Mary, will be mindful of the later-born of this twentieth century into that Holy Family.

THE GOOD INTENTION.

You tried and you failed; you wanted to be A someone who did, and now look and see! You're nothing but grief; it's hard to be fair; You tried and you lost, and now you don't care!

Oh, rouse yourself, boy! There's honor to you!

You gave all your best if you didn't get through!

The victor's not always the wearer of stars; It's often the one who can't leap o'er the bars,

But who doesn't give up and go round by the gate,

Nor lean on the fence and patiently wait; He fails but he leaps again and again, And strives to be first of the world's greatest men.

You failed when you promised Heaven you'd try

To live like the Saint who feared not to die; But somehow you failed and now you give in; It's hard to be good in this world that is sin; Don't say it! With victory right in your hands;

You had the intention and God understands. —MAISIE F. BIRMINGHAM, in *Sunday Companion*.

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