

## Christian Family.

MISS MARY STUMP, EDITOR.

## The Two Mysteries.

In the middle of the room, in its white coffin, lay the dead child, a nephew of the poet. Near it, in a great chair, sat Walt Whitman, surrounded by little ones, and holding a beautiful little girl on his lap. The child looked curiously at the specter of death, and then inquiringly into the old man's face. "You don't know what it is, do you my dear?" said he, adding, "We don't either."

We know not what it is, dear, this sleep so deep and still;  
The folded hands, the awful calm, the cheek so pale and chill;  
The lids that will not lift again, though we may call and call;  
The strange, white solitude of peace that settles over all.

We know not what it means, dear, this desolate heart-pain;  
This dread to take our daily way, and walk in it again;  
We know not to what other sphere the loved who leave us go,  
Nor why we're left to wonder still; nor why we do not know.

But this we know: Our loved and dead, if they should come this day—  
Should come and ask us, "What is life?" not one of us could say.  
Life is a mystery as deep as ever death can be;

Yet oh, how sweet it is to us, this life we live and see!

Then might they say—these vanished ones—and blessed is the thought!

"So death is sweet to us, beloved! though we may tell you naught;

We may not tell it to the quick—this mystery of death—

Ye may not tell us, if ye would, the mystery of breath."

The child who enters life comes not with knowledge or intent.

So those who enter death must go as little children sent.

Nothing is known. But I believe that God is overheard;

And as life is to the living, so death is to the dead.

—Scribner's Monthly.

## Summer Clouds.

Working, we plod on at our daily tasks the whole summer through, paying little heed to the beautiful imagery floating in the blue depths above us. God's own paintings those images are, changeable ever as they come and go, varying as the shifting scenes of the kaleidoscope, and they bring to those who watch their infinite multiplicity of form, pictures to please each heart's emotion.

Fanciful and evanescent though these cloudland pictures are they relieve the blue intenseness and give a sensuous pleasure to the eyes that in soul-blindness fail to see the artistic completeness, the poets' inspiration and the mercy of heaven, in the drifting of the white summer clouds. Nothing can make one more forgetful of life's small troubles and trials than tracing the grotesque shapes of the luminous cloud-pictures changing swiftly as a panorama. Artist never yet prisoned the fairy world of cloudland, nor touched canvas with lines of moving light and perfect beauty, such as God gives us day by day in the summer clouds; yet there are those who go wild over wonderful sky pictures, and are glad to pay enormous prices for them, who never think it worth their while to look above them and behold the loveliness of sky views penciled by a hand of which mortal ne'er can catch the inspiration. Poet's essay to tell us of the

"Blue deeps, magnificently strewn  
With summer clouds, large, light,  
And fugitive—by upper winds  
Through pompous motions blown."

But they cannot number, even faintly the glorious phantoms of the sky. Each for himself must lift his eyes from the yellow grain of the harvest field, and there above him in the boundless ether follow Fancy's flight among the summer clouds to know and realize the beautiful pictures God has given to all who will look upon them, rich and poor alike, without money and without price.

There is not a trouble a Christian has, but if he lives by faith in Christ in it, it will turn to a blessing.

## Discoveries at the Tower of London.

An English paper says: "Some very interesting and important historical discoveries have been made during the past few days by the Office of Works in their restoration of certain parts of the Tower of London. The special scene of their labors has been the Church of St. Peter and Vincula, which forms the front of the White Tower. The Commission of Superintendence under whose orders the work of removing the flooring and examining the various vaults took place consisted of the secretary of the Board of Works, a well-known London surgeon, and a representative of the Constable of the Tower. It was long before they came upon the coffins, or rather the light deal boxes, in which those executed for State offences had been interred within the chapel precincts. By the aid of contemporary chronicles and registers a very fair and probably accurate idea of the remains of some was arrived at. Across the floor, in the center of the chapel, was found the body of what was pronounced to be a woman of at least 70 years of age, which, according to all probability, was that of the Countess of Salisbury, the last of the Plantagenets. Not far from this spot was discovered the body of a man of great stature and bulk, which would answer to the description of Robert Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, the father of Lady Jane Grey. For some time it was doubted whether the fact of the head being found with the body did not upset this theory; but further search among the Tower records showed that in his case the usual formality of placing the head on London Bridge had been dispensed with. Close under the altar were the bones of a woman of excessively delicate proportions, showing that it was possessed of that "lyttel necke" which Anne Boleyn told the executioner would give him so little trouble to sever. No trace has yet been found of any body which can be identified as that of Lady Jane Grey, but the work of the commission is not yet terminated, and hopes are held out that the whole of the inmates of the vault of St. Peter and Vincula may sooner or later be identified. Meanwhile they are carefully gathered together, and placed in leaden caskets, labelled respectively "supposed remains" of the historical character with whom they are most easily and logically associated.

## The Romance of a Rose.

A story comes to us from the coal mines of the Lackawanna Valley—a simple story, but rich with the immense possibilities. In the "Diamond" shaft there was no steadier, harder worker than Jim Gardiner. What he did with his money was long a mystery—he had no wife, no family, no relatives that any one knew of, and yet no savings bank account. It was learned later that all but the little needed for his daily wants went for charity—found its way quietly, unobtrusively, into the huts of women and children whose husbands and fathers had gone down in the crush of falling timbers or come forth black and crisp from that scorching fire damp. There was something about Gardiner that suggested a former life of a higher grade. He talked but little, but that little was in choice dialect. His dress was as rough as the roughest, but he carried it as a man who had been used to face the world smilingly. They called him "Gentleman Jim" in the mines, but they all liked him as a man who always played fair and asked no odds. In the accident of last April, when the roof of a part of a mine fell in, Gardiner was killed. It appeared in the evidence that there were a few seconds during the crack of timbers before the roof fairly came down, and in that brief time, in those few beats of the pulse, "Gentleman Jim" had caught two boys with his lion-like

strength, and tossed them clear out of the fatal chamber into the safe main-alley. Then he went down with the roof. When his body was recovered the next day they found him with his right hand thrust inside his vest and clasping tight a little pocket-book. There was nothing in it save a card, on which was fastened, with a drop of sealingway on the stem all that remained of a rosebud and two geranium leaves. Underneath was written, in a woman's hand, "Marie—toute a toi—June 4th, 1867." Just below was written in a man's hand, "June 1870, all withered except the thorn." It is a tale for a poet—we have given the barest outlines as they come to us. But our informant adds that the face of the man as they found him, unmarred by the cruel rocks that crushed his chest, was placid as that of a sleeping child.—Ex.

## Taste in Dress.

Many who have the cares of a household on their mind think, with Catharine of Arragon, that "dressing time is wasting time." And where the spare moments are so few and far between as those housekeepers who not only have the superintendence of affairs, but find it necessary to perform the actual labor with their own hands, the temptation to coincide fully with such authority is great. But if a woman has no natural taste in dress, delight in the combination of colors or love of harmony in these things, she must be a little deficient in appreciation of the beautiful. As a work of art, a well dressed woman is a study. This does not in the least necessitate a close copy of the prevailing fashions, for one must cull and choose rejecting those unsuited to her form and general style. Even when a love of dress is natural, it does not follow that it should engross every other taste. It may exist happily with an appreciation of the best there is in literature, with a fondness and successful faculty for household duties, and certainly should never be considered apart from a love of neatness and order in all things. Dress can be so adapted as to hide natural defects, and heighten the charms possessed by the wearer. From the days of Annie Boleyn, who varied her dress every day, and always wore a small handkerchief around her neck to conceal a mark, and a falling sleeve to hide her doubly tipped little finger, many have made use of its advantages in this respect with success, and every woman should habitually make the best of herself and circumstances. Indifference, and consequent inattention to dress, often shows pedantry, self righteousness, or indolence, and whilst extolled by the severe utilitarian as a virtue, may frequently be quoted as a defect.—Fireside Friend.

## Some Facts About Leap Year.

The necessity of having one year in four with a single day more than the others is founded upon the fact that the rotation of the earth around the sun is accomplished in three hundred and sixty-five days, five hours, forty-eight minutes, less than a quarter of a day. Julius Caesar, when he attempted to correct the almanac, made the mistake of ignoring the eleven minutes; and a misunderstanding of the imperial decree fixed the leap year one year in three. Augustus, eight years B. C., ordained that for the next twelve years there should be no leap year, and thus corrected the error for the time. But there were the eleven minutes, which, as the centuries rolled on, became hours and days. The Council of Nice in A. D. 325 brought the sun and the almanac into harmony, but left the perplexing eleven minutes unprovided for. And it thus went on for twelve centuries, when Pope Gregory XIII, finding the sun ten days behind the calendar, ordained a radical cure—enjoining that the ten days between the 3d and 15th of October, 1752, should be struck out

of the almanac. The different nations of Europe adopted a like course, one after another—Protestant England being the last to conform to the Pope's bull in 1752, when the English calendar dropped eleven days in September, which had then accumulated. To prevent errors in future, it is necessary that three leap years be omitted in each four hundred years; and this is managed by making the omitted years the even hundreds that are not divisible by four hundred—so that 1700 nor 1800 were, and 1900 will not be a leap year; but 2000 will be as 1600 was. In transposing from "old" to "new style," the time must be taken into account. The further back we go, the fewer days it takes to make it right. The Pilgrims landed December 11; and, as the error was only ten days, the celebration of that event should be on the 21, and not on the 22d. The days of the week were not affected by this change. The fact that leap year gives unusual prerogatives to the gentler sex who are matrimonially inclined, is not of astronomical origin; but it may, nevertheless, be worthy of the most profound manual respect.

## How to Dry Flowers with Sand.

The *Floral Cabinet* says: There are many of our brilliant flowers, dahlias, pansies, pinks, geraniums, sweet williams, carnations, gladiolas, which may be preserved so as to retain their colors for years. White flowers will not answer for this purpose; nor any succulent plant, as hyacinthes or cactus. Take deep dishes, or those of sufficient depth to allow the flowers to be covered an inch in depth with sand; get the common white sand, such as is used for scouring purposes, cover the bottom of the dish with a layer an inch thick, and then lay in the flowers with their stems downward, holding them firmly in place while you sprinkle more sand over them, until all places between the petals are filled and the flowers buried out of sight. A broad dish will accommodate quite a number; allow sufficient sand between. Set the dish in a dry warm place where they will dry gradually, and at the end of a week pour off the sand and examine them; if there is any moisture in the sand it must be dried out before using again, or fresh sand may be poured over them, the same as before. Some flowers will require weeks to dry, while others will become sufficiently dry to put away in a week or ten days. By this simple process, flowers, ferns, etc., are preserved in their proper shape, as well as in their proper color, which is far better than to press them in books. When arranged in groups or mounted on cards or in little straw baskets, they may be placed in frames under glass.

## The Thumb as an Index of Contempt.

Scott says to bite the glove or the thumb was a border pledge of moral revenge. In England thumb-biting was practiced to goad an adversary into fighting. Dekker tells us that St. Paul's Walk was notable for shoulderings, jeerings and biting of thumbs to beget quarrels; and Shakespeare imports the fashion into Verona. When Gregory and Sampson spy two Montague men out fly their swords; but prudent Sampson, to compel the others to take the initiative, bites his thumb at them, "which is a disgrace if they bear it." Challenged with the question, "Did you bite your thumb at me, sir?" he replies, "No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir; but I bite my thumb" and in a few moments the fray begins. It was not absolutely necessary to put the thumb to the mouth. In 1261 a rude fellow was sent to prison for casting vile contempt upon the clerk or the Sheriff of London by raising his thumb "in manifest contempt of our Lord the King's."

If one Neapolitan wishes to anger

another, he places the palm of his right hand on the back of the left and shakes the crossed thumbs, symbolical of donkey's ears, at him; a pleasant bit of pantomime answering to the "taking a sight" popular elsewhere—a sign of contemptuous defiance said to be at least as old as ancient Assyria.—All the Year Round.

## The Liberalization of New England Christianity.

It is a simple fact that the working beliefs in New England have been steadily approaching the ground occupied by what is known as liberal Christianity. Old Orthodoxy has been stripping itself like a circus rider who throws off one garment after another, as it has ridden round the ring of successive generations. First came off the scarlet hunting suit of the witch-finder, then the Geneva cloak of the predestinarian, then the Jewish gaberdine of the Sabbatarians, and I know not how many more; and already we see the fair outlines of our common humanity which had been more or less obscured for a long time by these disguises. When I think of Increase Mather burning Robert Cole's book against the witchcraft delusion in the yard of Harvard College, of which he was president, and imagine his successor of to-day taking part in a similar ceremony, I feel as if you might as well read the stamp act to the great grandchildren of the "Sons of Liberty," as the old New England Confession of Faith to the descendants of the Pilgrims and the Puritans. When I remember that the ancestor of the one little child, by whose thread of life alone I hold to the generation yet in the tender bud, disposed of the infants on trial before their final judge by making him say that although

"in bliss

They may not hope to dwell  
Still unto them he will allow  
The easiest room in hell."

when I remember that Jonathan Edwards, the great champion of a latter New England orthodoxy, spoke of children, with certain rare exceptions, as "young vipers and infinitely more hateful than vipers in the sight of God"—exposed every day to eternal burnings—and think what a universal ery of outraged motherhood would silence this Herod of the pulpit in the Boston of to-day, I can believe that almost any cherished dogma which stands in the way of a true catholic union of all believers in the eternal Gospel of righteousness may fade out as obsolete, if it is not blotted out as inhuman, and therefore ungodly.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

## Thorough Dusting.

In buying articles of furniture it is as well to choose those which can be easily kept in order. The intricate carvings and artistic designs which please us when a sofa or chair is new, will become traps for dust unless they are carefully wiped off every day. In dusting it is well to have at hand a feather brush and clean cloth. Old silk handkerchiefs answer the purpose very well. Soft Turkish crash is very good and satisfactory. The neat matron will see that all her dusting cloths are washed every week, and should also shake them thoroughly after each time of using.

It is a good plan occasionally to wash varnished surfaces with warm water. Cleanliness is a really attractive feature in a house, and a very plain home which is thoroughly nice and spotless in its appointments, is more inviting than a costly one which is ill-kept.—Ex.

A little girl hearing it said that she was born on the king's birthday took no notice of it at the time, but a day or two after asked her father if she and the king were twins.

It is sad to see many walk in the dark themselves who carry a lantern for others.