

Alpha and Omega.

ROBERT J. BURDETTE IN LADIES' HOME JOURNAL.

Night.
Silence.
A struggle for the light.
And he did not know what light was. An effort to cry. And he did not know that he had a voice.

He opened his eyes "and there was light." He had never used his eyes before, but he could see with them. He parted his lips and hailed this world with a cry for help. A tiny craft in sight of new shores; he wanted his latitude and longitude. He could not tell from what port he had cleared; he did not know where he was; he had no reckoning, no chart, no pilot.

He did not know the language of the inhabitants of the planet upon which Providence had cast him. So he saluted them in the one universal speech of God's creatures—a cry. Everybody—every one of God's children, understands that.

Nobody knew whence he came. Some one said, "He came from Heaven." They did not even know the name of the little life that came throbbing out of the darkness into the light. They had only said, "If it should be a boy," and "If it should be a girl." They did not know. And the baby himself knew as little about it as did the learned people gathered to welcome him. He heard them speak. He had never used his ears until now, but he could hear them. "A good cry," some one said. He did not understand the words, but he kept on crying.

Possibly he had never entertained any conception of the world into whose citizenship he was now received, but evidently he did not like it. The noises of it were harsh to his sensitive nerves. There was a man's voice—the doctor's, strong and reassuring. There was a woman's voice, soothing and comforting—the voice of the nurse. And one was a mother's voice. There is none other like it. It was the first music he had heard in this world. And the sweetest.

By-and-by somebody laughed softly and said in coaxing tones:

"There—there—there—give him his dinner."
His face was laid close against the fount of life, warm and white and tender. Nobody told him what to do. Nobody fought him. He knew. Placed suddenly on the guest-list of this changing old caravansary, he knew his way at once to two places in it—his bed-room and the dining-room.

Wherever he came from he must have made a long journey, for he was tired and hungry when he reached here. Wanted something to eat right away. When he got it he went to sleep. Slept a great deal. When he awoke he clamored again, in the universal volapuk, for refreshment. Had it and went to sleep again.

When he grew older the wise men told him the worst thing in all this world, of the many good and bad things that he could do, was to eat just before going to sleep. But the baby, not having learned the language of the wise men, did this very worst of all bad things, and, having no fear of the wise men, defiantly threw upon it.

He looked young, but made himself at home with an easy assurance of an old traveller. Knew the best room in the house, demanded it, and got it. Nestled into his mother's arms as though he had been measured for them.

Found that "gracious hollow that God made" in his mother's shoulder that fit his head as pillows of down never could. Cried when they took him away from it, when he was a tiny baby "with no language but a cry." Cried once again, twenty-five or thirty years afterward, when God took it away from him. All the languages he had learned, and all the eloquent phrasing the colleges had taught him, could not then voice the sorrow of his heart so well as the tears he tried to check.

Poor little baby! Had to go to school the first day he got here. He had to begin his lessons at once. Got praised when he learned them. Got punished when he missed them.

Bit his own toes and cried when he learned there was pain in this world. Studied the subject forty years before he learned in how many ways suffering can be self-inflicted.

Reached for the moon and cried because he couldn't get it. Reached for the candle and cried because he could. First lessons in veneration. Took him fifty or sixty years of hard reading to learn why God put so many beautiful things out of our longing reach.

Made everybody laugh long before he could laugh himself, by going into a temper because his clothes didn't fit him or his dinner wasn't served promptly. "Just like a man," the nurse said. Nobody in the family could tell where he got his temper. Either he brought it with him, or found it wrapped and addressed to his room when he got here. At any rate, he began to use it very shortly after his arrival.

Always said he lost his temper, when most certainly he had it and was using it. Played so hard sometimes that it made him cry. Took him a great many years to learn that too much play is apt to make anybody cry.

By-and-by he learned to laugh. That came later than some of the other things—much later than crying. It is a higher accomplishment. It is much harder to learn and much harder to do. He never cried unless he wished

and felt just like it. But he learned to laugh many, many times when he wanted to cry.

Grew so that he could laugh with a heart so full of tears they glistened in his eyes. Then people praised his laughter the most—"It was in his very eyes," they said.

Laughed, one baby day, to see the motes dance in the sunshine. Laughed at them once again, though not quite so cheerily, many years later, when he discovered they were only motes.

Cried, one baby day, when he was tired of play and wanted to be lifted in the mother arms and sung to sleep. Cried again one day when his hair was white because he was tired of work, and wanted to be lifted in the arms of God and hushed to rest.

Wished half his life that he was a man. Then turned around and wished all the rest of it that he was a boy.

Seeing, hearing, playing, working, resting, believing, suffering and loving, all his life long he kept on learning the same things he began to study when he was a baby.

OMEGA.

Until at last, when he had learned all his lessons and school was out, somebody lifted him, just as they had done at first. Darkened was the room, and quiet now, as it had been then. Other people stood about him, very like the people who stood there at that other time.

There was a doctor now as then; only this doctor wore a grave look and carried a book in his hand. There was a man's voice—the doctor's strong and reassuring. There was a woman's voice, low and comforting.

The mother-voice had passed into silence. But that was the one he could most distinctly hear. The others he heard, as he heard voices like them years ago. He could not then understand what they said; he did not understand them now.

He parted his lips again, but all his school-acquired wealth of many-syllabled eloquence, all his clear, lucid phrasing, had gone back to the old inarticulate cry.

Somebody at his bedside wept. Tears now, as then. But now they were not tears from his eyes.

Then, some one bending over him had said, "He came from Heaven." Now some one stooping above him said, "He has gone to Heaven." The blessed, unflinching faith that welcomed him, now bade him Godspeed, just as loving and trusting as ever, one unchanging thing in this world of change.

So the baby had walked in a little circle, after all, as all men, lost in a great wilderness, are said always to do. As it was written thousands of years ago—"The dove found no rest for the soul of her foot, and she returned unto him in the Ark."

He felt weary now, as he was tired then. By-and-by, having then for the first time opened his eyes, now for the last time he closed them.

The Kilkenny Cats In Church.

BY REV. GERARD B. F. HALLOCK.

Everybody has heard of the famous cats of Kilkenny; "Each cat thought there was one cat too many;

So they quarrelled and fit,
They scratched and they bit,
Till, excepting their tails,
And some scraps of their nails,
Instead of two cats, there wa'n't any."

Now that is a genuine, fac-simile picture of a church quarrel and its usual results. It is a sadly true representation of the way far too many churches meet their death. It seems strange that there should have been need for an apostle's warning against Christians "biting" and "devouring" one another. For wolves to devour sheep is no special wonder; but for sheep to devour one another is monstrous and most astonishing. Yet Paul seemed to foresee that this most unnatural of things would transpire, and therefore wrote a most definite and forcible warning: "But if ye bite and devour one another take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." And sad to contemplate is it how many, many churches, since those words were written, have met their death in this unnatural, savage-like, cannibalistic manner!

They say that there is a star-fish in the Caledonian lakes sometimes dredged up from the deep water. It looks firm and strong, most compactly knit together. But the moment that you pull off one of its branching limbs, no matter how small it may be, the singular creature begins itself to dislocate the rest with wonderful celerity of contortion, throwing away its radiate arms, and jerking from their sockets its members, until the entire body is a shapeless wreck and confusion of death, and nothing remains of what was one of the most exquisitely beautiful forms in nature save wriggling fragments, each repulsive and dying by suicide. What could suggest a picture more sadly true of a quarrelling congregation? So any church may go. Once left the members, forgetting God, rush into reckless bickerings and quarrels, and usually how they do hurry themselves into utter dissolution and remediless ruin! The end comes swiftly. And this sight, we are sorry to say, is not rare. There have been enough such church deaths in our fair land to make a whole cemetery full of desolate graves. And

over every one of them might be erected a monument with this dire inscription: "Died of suicide by dismemberment."

Now there is one sure remedy—a remedy against every such evil possibility. It is love—love to Christ, and to one another for Christ's sake. Where such love is found church discord cannot come. A wife of a few months, in her first quarrel, was asked by her husband which ought to give up first. With a smile and a caress she replied: "The one that loves most." Think what blessed results would flow from following this rule in the family of God. Who will do most, even submit to most? The one that loves most. Yes; and who will bear most and yield first for Zion's sake? He who loves most. Beautiful are the fruits of love as displayed in the Christian. Surely we ought to cultivate them more, and thereby more and more display the graces that should mark the members of the household of God.

"But," says one, "I have rights." So you have. But that does not make it either wise or right for you to drive ruthlessly along and run over people and wreck things. Having the right of way does not necessarily imply that you should take it. There is many a railroad train which has the right of way on the track, and yet does not move forward. The road belongs to the train, and no other train has a right on the track; but there is another train there—perhaps through ignorance, accident, or wilfulness; nevertheless the train is there. If the engineer undertakes to drive on because he has the right of way there will be an inevitable wreck. So he must waive his claim, and wait till the track is clear, right or no right, if he would escape a general smash. So you see it does not work well for a man under all circumstances to claim and enforce even his rights. Rights are rights, but wrecks are wrecks; and it is better to sacrifice rights than plunge into ruinous wrecks. And just so is it better for a sensible Christian man or woman to endure much, sacrifice much and concede much rather than put on steam, drive through, wreck his train, break his own neck and the necks of others. A celebrated English lawyer was once asked the secret of his success. He replied: "I win my cases by admissions." He would admit so much, would yield so far and make so many concessions, that the jury were impressed with his extreme fairness. Wonderful principle this would be for securing peace in the household of God. Why should we insist on having only our own way? No great principle can be at stake; certainly none so important as that of love and good-will. Why not yield to the wishes of others? Win peace by concession—a most honorable triumph!

Let us not forget that love, brotherly love, is the badge of discipleship. To be really Christ's is to display a spirit of love which must annihilate all feuds and heal all differences. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."—Presbyterian Banner.

Every one should read Dr. Henry V. Noye's article, in *The Missionary Review of the World* for November, on "The Present Situation in China." It is a masterly survey of the conditions and outlook from both a political and missionary standpoint. Another interesting article is contributed by Dr. John M. Allis of Chile and deals with the moral and religious condition of that South American Republic. All the Departments deserve a careful reading. Published monthly by Funk & Wagnalls Company, 30 Lafayette Place, New York, \$2.50 a year.

"Dwellers in Gotham" is the title of a story (by a clever American writer, who conceals his identity under the *nom de plume* of "Annan Dale") which will be published simultaneously in England, the United States and Canada—in the latter country by William Briggs. It is a vivid, striking story of New York's social, commercial and religious life. A rich vein of humor runs throughout the book; the conversations are unusually bright and clever, and the narrative plot, well sustained throughout, is marked alternately by the humorous, the pathetic and the strongly dramatic. The book will appear early in December.

The Homiletic Review for November has important articles having practical bearing on the preacher's work and ideals. Dr. Cunningham Geikie, the distinguished author of "The Life and Words of Jesus," writes lucidly on "The Preacher in Daily Life." General O. O. Howard, the veteran soldier of the Cross, presents, from his own experience, "The Layman's Work—Preaching for Salvation." Dr. Stuckenborg unfolds some of the many pressing questions that have arisen out of the new social conditions of the world. Rev. Vernon B. Carroll estimates, in a most readable style, the value of "Semi-Secular Preaching." The Editorial Note on "The Twentieth Century's Urgent Call" urges the new ideal and the new duties that are called for by the suddenly changed conditions and relations of the American Church and Nation.