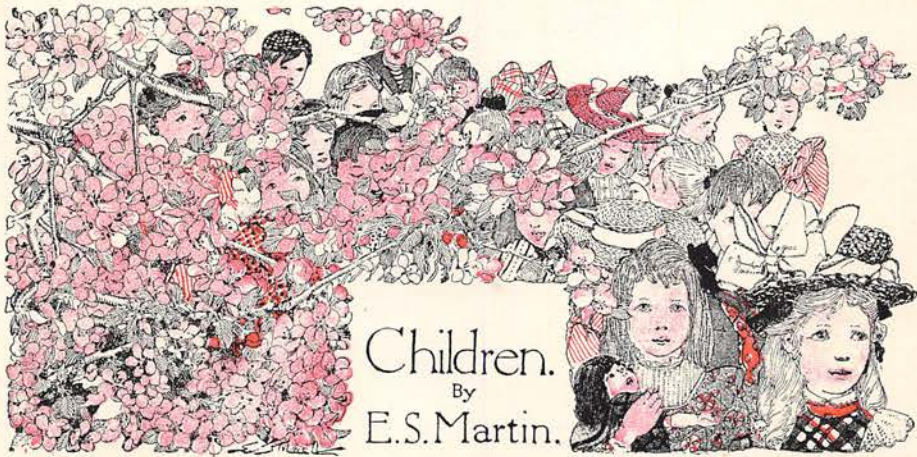




A NEW DAY.



Children.  
By  
E.S. Martin.

IT is not the custom in our family to return thanks after food, but seven-year-old Blandina, who is very deliberate about taking her simple nourishment, is apt, when she has finished what has been set before her and taken off her bib, to get down from her chair and kiss both her parents. Such a demonstration has never been expected, much less exacted, from Blandina. It is an impulse from within—the outward sign of replenished energies, and of a prompt and instinctive appreciation of the blessings of this life.

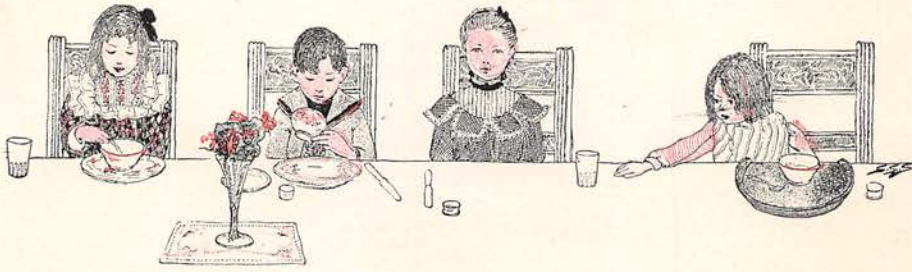
Those blessings Blandina has always appreciated. She has always been glad to be alive. She wakes in the morning benignly disposed towards all creation. She is glad when it is breakfast-time, glad to go to school, glad to come home, glad to get her luncheon, glad, after lunch, to go to the park, or to shop, or to read or play at home, or to do anything that comes handy. And when the gas is lighted, and the hour for bread-and-milk and dropped eggs comes around, she greets those restoratives with enthusiasm. It

cannot truthfully be said of her that she is glad to go to bed. Usually she goes with reluctance and sometimes with tears; but once abed, her pleasant impressions of existence reassert themselves, her philosophy returns, and the current of her affections resumes its course. Somehow Blandina's affections seem to be always in commission. She is a person of considerable wilfulness, not without temper, not at all indifferent to getting her full share of any good thing that may be in course of distribution. Her tears flow readily and often, but dry incredibly soon. There never was a child more appreciative of the pleasures of consolation. I suppose that if she were analyzed by a competent hand, the report would note traces of jealousy and selfishness. Nevertheless she has the great charms of repose and good-will. The repose comes from the capacity to be satisfied with favorable conditions for a considerable period at a time. When she has been duly wound up, she goes steadily until she runs down. The good-will is an accident of birth.





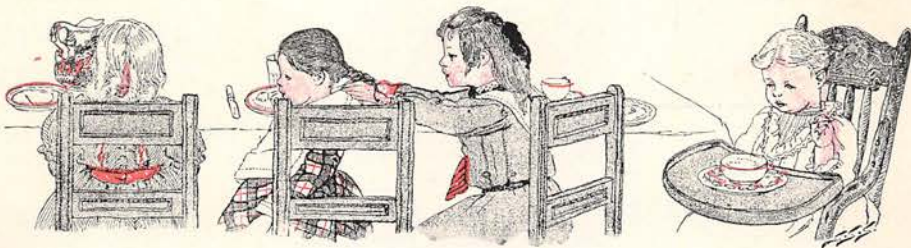
BREAKFAST.



Blandina was born comfortable in mind and body, and affectionately disposed towards mankind and all nature. She looks always with interest into the world's mirror and sees pleasant things there. That is the gold spoon in her baby mouth. That is what makes her blunt nose, with all its freckles, seem an advantageous feature. That is what makes her more valuable as a mundane possession than a pretty big bunch of bonds with gilt on their edges and coupons attached. The coupons only come off the bonds twice a year, but the interest on Blandina accrues by the hour, and the payments are generous and constant.

The disgruntled person who thought that life might be tolerable if it were not for its pleasures was unable, probably, to command the simple and profitable form of satisfaction which comes from living in the house with a nice child. To be sure, *one* nice child is a scant allowance. At least six is preferable, if one can find keep and education for so many. Jason Jackson, of Boston, who loves all sports, and searches life's pockets for pleasures, appreciates children with a man's irresponsible joy, and loves to have them about in all stages of growth. It was he who admitted, with a new baby in his lap, that he liked to have always one nice soft one in the house. All properly constituted parents share that liking, though

it is a very exceptional family nowadays that lives persistently up to its preferences in this particular. It is the disposition of all the world in these days to run to town; and town life, full of distractions and elaborations, and calculations and costs, undoubtedly favors small families. The possession of great treasures inevitably involves cares, and mothers remember, even if fathers forget, that children don't grow up as they should without thought being taken for them. One child is a more anxious charge than two or three, but more children than two or three means more care, and it is possible that of care there may be an over-supply. Then, too, the distribution of living space in cities is not at all sensible. The rule ought to be that the largest families should have the largest houses. The rule is, with due exceptions to prove it, that the size of one's domicile is in inverse proportion to the size of one's family. That is because the more of the family income goes for food, clothes, and schooling, the less remains for rent. The world is full of just such rules invented for the confusion of parents. Nevertheless, though there are folks to whom children are a trial, and to whom a certain scale of living, and strawberries in March, and the opera, and timely journeys, and various privileges of an unencumbered life, are worth more than young





IN SCHOOL.



faces at the breakfast table and kisses at bedtime, the general conclusion of mankind is that nice children are God's best gift.

Some persons of a superior virtue live childless in the married state and love one another, and keep the peace, and find interests in life that afford them due entertainment; but the success which they make in living—when they do make it—is the triumph of character over circumstances, and it takes superior virtue to compass it. We should always admire and respect such persons as beings superior to their fate, and conversely we would seem entitled to think rather small potatoes of married people who, with children to help them, don't manage to live harmonious. In the case of such a couple it is pretty safe to conclude that about one or the other of them there is something very much amiss, since with the greatest luxury in life vouchsafed to them they cannot profit by it.

To have a family and no means of support is a serious predicament, and it is not bettered by the fact that the family is large. A family with a bad physical or mental inheritance, or in the hands of incompetent parents, is not likely to be a blessing or a valuable asset in the world. But a family of well-born children, committed to parents who appreciate their charge and are equal to it, is one of the

very best things going. The very best and most important thing in the world is folks. Without them the world would be a mere point in space, and of no account except as a balance weight. All that ails the world as it is is a shortage of folks of the right quality. Of everything else there is enough to go around. Consequently the most valuable gift that can come to earth through man is rightly constituted children. Beside them all other forms of wealth are defective. Money is an excellent thing in so far as it enables one to command health and power and education and opportunity, and promotes one's usefulness, but children are a power and an unceasing entertainment, and constitute usefulness immediate and prospective. While money tempts to idleness, children are an incentive to industry; where money makes for self-indulgence, children make for self-denial; where money is an aid to vagrancy, children necessitate a home and some adherence to it. Money in superfluous quantities is a recognized demoralizer, but every good child is a moralizer to its parents. Can there be any question, then, that to accumulate a reasonable number of children is better worth one's while than to accumulate an unreasonable amount of money? Not a bit: and yet the world is full of ignorants whose ideal of the condition of happiness is to have a very large





NOON-TIME.



fortune and a very small family. To such persons to raise more than two children seems a flight in the face of Providence, and a reckless preference for the poor-house as the refuge of one's declining days. Great is prudence; but it is worth remembering that there are chances of raising too few children as well as too many, and while it is an embarrassment to have a young family on one's hands and run out of funds, it is also an embarrassment to find one's self past middle life and fairly in funds but short of children. The man who has exercised such discretion as to reach the age of fifty without having any children to fall back on has probably, if he has any sense, passed the period when he admires his own prudence, and has come to think of himself as one who has wasted his opportunities.

We are amiss in that we don't think of children as wealth. Our minds are apt to dwell unduly on the cost of raising them and starting them in the world, and not enough on the profit of them. We speak of Jenkins as "a poor man with a very large family," as though a man with a large family could justly be regarded as poor, provided the family was of good quality. Jenkins has only six or seven children, and can feed and clothe and love them all, and sends them to school, and has fun with them—thanks to his having a very able wife. We also speak of Disbrow

as a rich man with one daughter, as though a man with much money and only one daughter could justly be called rich. We are not very accurate in our use of language. If a man who has valuables is rich, Jenkins is very well off, and we should recognize it in our thoughts of him; whereas a man with much money and only one daughter is but one step removed from want.

Excessively rich people rarely raise large families nowadays, and there are good reasons for it. They haven't time, for one thing. Conscientious parents, be they rich or poor, don't want to neglect their children, or to turn them over entirely to hired supervision. You might almost as well not have children as not live with them and be bothered with them. But six or seven children constitute for many years almost a complete occupation for a mother, and women who can command the various exercises that money can buy are loath to spend too large a share of their lives in the service of childhood. You can't take a troop of children abroad in the spring, to Newport in the summer, to Lenox in the fall, to New York in the winter, and to Florida in February. They have to go to school, for one thing; and, for another, it isn't healthy for them to keep them on the road. Any travelling circus-man will tell you that it's hard to keep the menagerie cubs alive while the show is mov-







THE EVENING HOUR.



ing. There's no place for children like almost any plain home where the plumbing is safe, and the water can be boiled, and where you think your doctor knows the milkman. But if you are going to stay at home, there's no special point about being egregiously rich, so the families of the extremely opulent as a general thing are small. Another thing: where there is a fortune of one hundred and fifty millions or more, it always seems a pity to split it into more than two or three pieces. It is well enough as endowments after the division, but it is spoilt as a curiosity. When a collection of money has been made so nearly complete that it approaches the condition of being a phenomenon, there is a natural reluctance on the owner's part to cut it up into mere incidents. Accordingly the incalculably rich do not, as a rule, care for a large group of heirs; one or two answer as well as a dozen. As far as raising a large family goes, a man with only two or three millions is better off than though he were really opulent, for if he has ten children he can provide for them all, and educate them, and give them a handsome start in life, and still have enough left to live and die on and make his widow happy. The idea of being "worth" a hundred and fifty millions, and raising as large a family as such a fortune would warrant, is not a practical idea, albeit it is a dream of a grand family.

The interminable variety in children has its good points and its disadvantages. If they were more alike they would be less interesting, but it would be more nearly possible to feel that a family was sometimes complete. But the possibilities of heredity are inexhaustible. One child inherits this or that from his mother and something else from his father, and another in selecting the composite qualities in which it is to clothe itself may skip its parents altogether and go back to grandparents or forebears still more remote. This lends an interminable excitement to the rearing of families. The certainty that no new-comer will be a duplicate of any child in being stirs in the optimist thoughts of combinations of powers and perfections the development of which it would be a life-long delight to watch. The records of some younger children, late-comers in large families, who have been born with great endowments and turned out to be great people, must always be an aggravation to ambitious parents whose families are small. To know of whole series of wonders which have been accomplished by seventh sons is disconcerting to folks to whom a seventh son is an impossible luxury; but they may always comfort themselves by remembering that a small family well raised is more likely to rejoice its parents than a big one neglected.





SHADOW-TIME.



But that introduces the question of what a good bringing-up consists in. As to that, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We will all agree that children should learn to read and write, and speak the truth; that it is good for them to love and be loved; that they ought not to be so snowed under with what are called "advantages" as to stifle their natural development; that the aim of education is to bring out the good and the strength there is in the child, and not to shape it by main strength according to some preconceived idea of parent or teacher.

The people who are of most account in the world are the people who work. We certainly do not want our children to grow up into do-nothings. We want them to learn to work as hard and as successfully as possible. We want them also to be good, and to keep out of mischief, and to be pleasant. We want them, if possible, to be so trained as to be able to work advantageously at things whereof the pursuit is agreeable and stimulating, and which bring rich rewards to successful labor.

We shall not be content with a development of mind or of body which the heart does not share. If our children are successful solely for themselves, and

not for us too, and for others as well, we shall not feel entirely proud of their raising. We all feel, though, that the common lot is not quite good enough for our children. We hope for them that they may not drudge interminably at weary tasks. We want to command for them the brighter aspects of life. We cannot be sure of accomplishing that, but if we are wise enough, and not too selfish or too lazy ourselves, we can do a good deal towards it. Unworthy people who are shrewd and selfish and unscrupulous get a good deal in this world that is rated as valuable, but, after all, the use that they are able to make of what they get depends upon what they are. We want our children to grow up to be such persons that ill fortune, if they meet with it, will bring out strength in them, and that good fortune will not trip them up, but make them winners. To fight the battle of life under hard conditions and fall on the field is not inglorious, but to be turned loose in fields that are white and gather no satisfying harvest, ah! that is a sad fate. We should try by all means to save our children from that. One may miss most of the comforts of life and still succeed, but to have good chances and waste them all is failure.

