SADIE AND HER PETS

AND OTHER STORIES

BY PEBBLE

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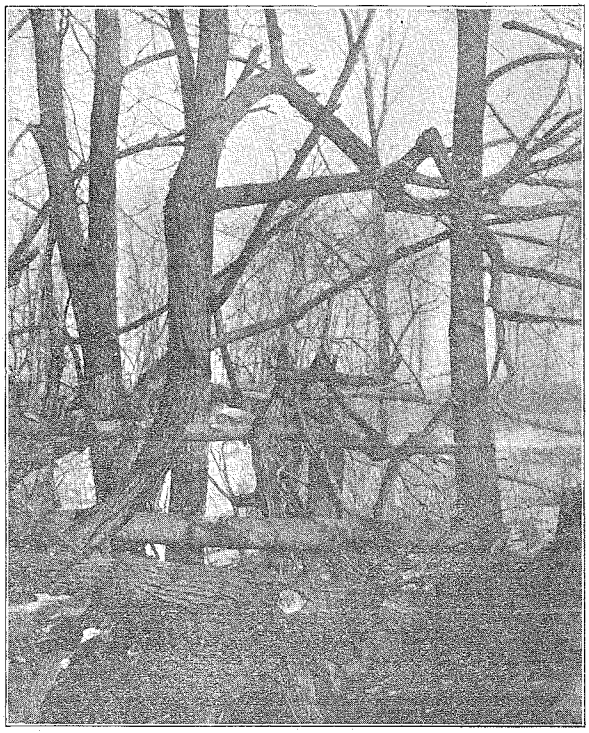
SADIE AND HER PETS.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Sadie Gray was a very little girl her parents moved out of the town where they had lived so long, and after trying farm life for a while they thought they liked it very much and concluded to buy a farm of their own. So, after searching for some time for a place where they might make a comfortable home, they at last found one in a new part of the country. A rather lonesome place it seemed at first, for the neighbors were few and far between and there was no schoolhouse within three miles.

Lonesome as it was, withal, it was a pretty place. There were the prairies, covered with the tall grasses and nodding wild flowers, and, where in the hollows they only half hid in the warm June days, the fresh, red-lipped strawberries; and on the hillsides in the later summer might be found many of their darker-hued sisters, the blackberries. Then, there were the forests where the flowers grew none the less sweet in wild profusion; where in the autumn the red and yellow, lucious plums were the reward of the one who might search through the thickly-tangled undergrowth of brush and smaller trees. Nor was this all that autumn brought; the first sharp touches of Jack Frost's fingers upon the woodland ripened and

sent the nuts from hickory- and walnut-trees clattering to the ground. He touched with his magic fingers the leaves of the sumac and turned them into gorgeous crimson, the oak to brown, and the



THE WOODS WERE BROWN AND BARE.

hickory and maple into flaming yellow, and still others appeared in bright dresses of scarlet; and then how beautiful the scene.

When winter came and the leaves fell and the woods were brown and bare, he tried his skillful fingers again and traced from bough to bough his network of lace-like patterns in lines of purest white. But brightest and best of all the days of the year to Sadie were the days when winter began to lay aside its white robe, when the blue-birds and martins returned from the south land and caroled again among the branches of the trees, where the warm sunshine swelled the buds until they again burst forth into verdure and blossom. For, although the winter might have its own joys and pleasures, nothing could equal the gladness of the springtime.

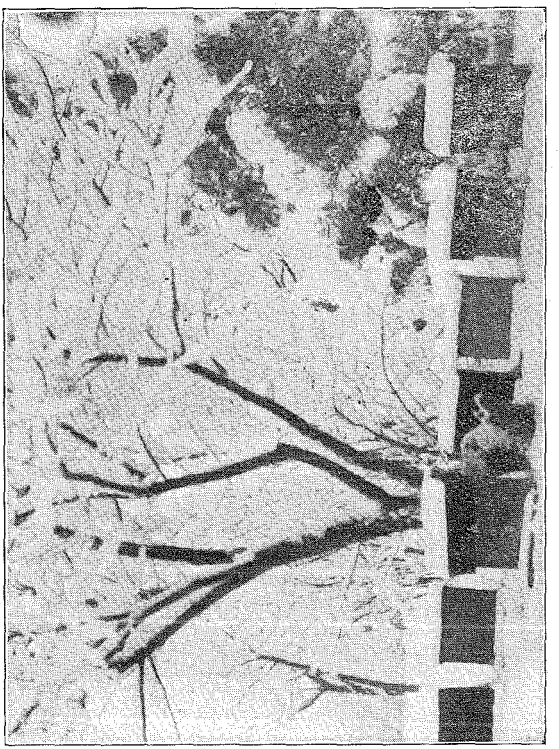
She often grew quite lonely for the companionship of the playmates she had left behind, and longed for the school which now she could not attend, but must study at home under the instruction of her mother or an older sister. Still there were lots of things in the new home that she often thought went a long way toward making up for the loss of school and companions of her own age, and, as she was somewhat of a dreamer, she made good use of her imagination, in supplying substitutes for much that she could not in reality have.

There was little break in the monotony of the home life there. Ruth, the older sister, taught school some distance from home, and came and went as her terms closed and opened; Joe, an older brother, worked steadily on the farm; Minnie was

away attending school a part of the time; and William, nearest to her in age though some five years her senior, did the chores and helped to clear away the underbrush, trim the trees, and get the farm in a state of cultivation. With him she spent much of her time when she could, following him as he performed his duties and errands, or sitting on a log where she chatted to him as he trimmed a tree he had just hewn down, watching his quick strokes as he cut away the brush, or helping him pile it in a clearing ready to burn. And then the big bonfire they would make! she carrying the lighter fagots to keep it going and he dragging those that were too heavy for her. Again, when the brush and branches were cleared away and burned, and the poles and larger limbs of the trees fit for wood were piled ready to be sawed, Sadie still found it her lot and pleasure to sit upon the pole to hold it steady on the saw-horse while he sent the smooth saw flying through the hard wood. These were among Sadie's happiest hours, these times when she could be outside helping brother William, who was always so good and kind.

Then, Sadie had her pets with which she spent much of her time, and her dolls, Josephine and Rosa. Of her pets there was the little black spaniel they called Prince, with whom she had many a romp out in the meadows, but Prince was more often away with the team in the field.

Books were favorite friends of hers, but as her parents were poor she did not have many of them. I must tell you about her cats, also, for better than



AND TRACED FROM BOUGH TO BOUGH HIS NETWORK OF LACE-LIKE PATTERNS

dolls or dogs she loved her cats. She made a pet of every cat that came in reach of her door. It mattered not whether the cat was black as night, or pure white; whether it was shabby gray, tawny

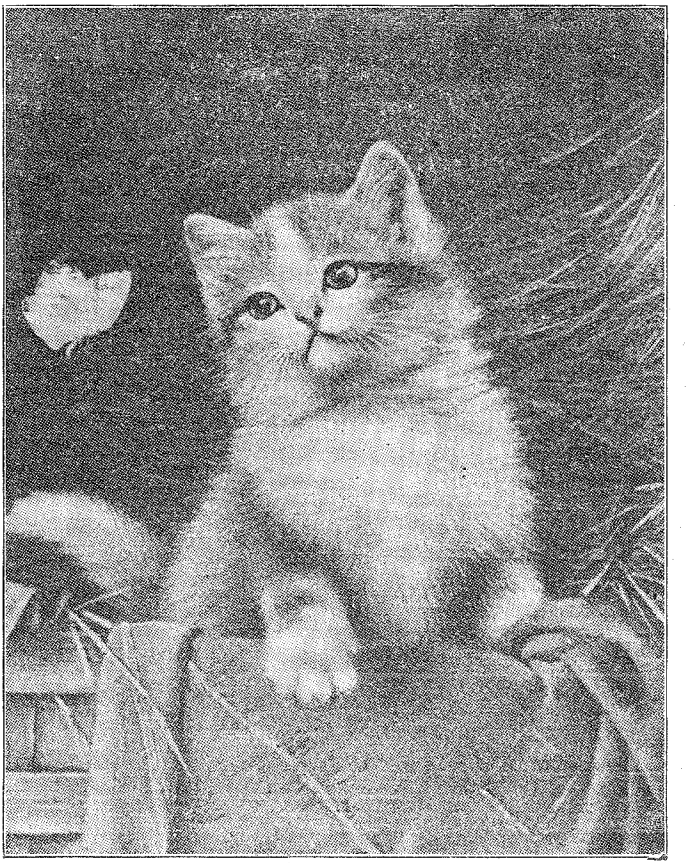
yellow, or maltese; whether it was old, or just a tiny little kitten; whether lean and gaunt, or pretty and dainty, it soon won a place in Sadie's heart, and, by her influence, it usually won a place in the household. So it generally happened that there were plenty of cats around. I shall not attempt to tell about them all but I shall tell you first about her pet kitten, Keturah.

I am sure I don't know how Sadie came to name her Keturah, though I think maybe mamma suggested the name, or big brother Joe might have had something to do with it, but anyway Sadie thought it was a very pretty name and that it sounded something like kitty, and, being suitable, Keturah it was.

A very tiny kitten she was, not more than five or six weeks old when she was given to Sadie. Papa had carried it six miles in his rain-coat pocket. A very pretty kitten was Keturah, with breast and feet of pure white, back yellow and black spotted; a wee specimen of the tortoise-shell cat.

Very comfortable Sadie soon made the tired, frightened, little thing, giving it first some warm milk which it scarcely yet knew how to drink, and then fixing it a nice little bed by the fire, giving it gentle little pats until it soon became no longer afraid but curled itself up into a tiny ball and went to sleep. Plenty of nice warm milk and good care made Miss Keturah grow very fast, and, as a

reward to Sadie for her care, she soon proved herself to be a most excellent mouser, clearing the



house and barn of mice and rats in a remarkably short time and thereby establishing herself as an

important member of the household in the eyes of all.

So summer passed away and the autumn store of nuts had been gathered and winter winds had come; and, with one of its icy northern winds, came Christmas. Christmas in Sadie's home came a little later than usual that year, for Ruth could not get home until a few days after, and Minnie was with her, and father was away at work; but the plans and preparations for their return home were none the less joyous for the waiting. The Christmas air of anticipation reigned supreme in the house, while William and Sadie busied their fingers stoning the raisins and cleaning the currants for mother's mince pies and fruit-cake.

It was a wintry day when they all returned, bringing with them a friend or two to make things all the more lively, and Ruth declared in her happy way that they must certainly have a Christmas-tree the following evening so that it would really seem like Christmas to all of them. So the next morning they all went to work with a will, popping corn and stringing it, making decorations for the tree out of bright-colored paper, making and pulling the candy; and late in the afternoon the boys went out and selected a tree, brought it in, and placed it in one corner of the sitting-room. In front of the tree they placed a small table to which they fastened the tree to make it steady, and in front of the table was hung a curtain. As

the short, wintry twilight gave way to darkness and the work both outside and in was all finished up and supper was over, the older girls with their friend went up-stairs to get the things. Now while they were up-stairs busy getting the presents ready, Joe, who was fond of playing pranks, cast about to see what he could. There was no one to watch what he was doing. Taking Sadie's small rocking-chair and a little bell of hers, he tied it to the chair and placed the chair behind the curtain, then he tied one end of a long twine string to the chair and let the remainder of it lie along the floor close to the wall where it would not be noticed; then he placed his chair at the end of the string which was some distance from the tree as he did not want to excite suspicion by being too near it. The presents were all placed on the tree and everything was about ready, when Ruth with a lamp in her hand went up to the tree to fasten something on a little more securely or to see that everything was all right. The sudden ringing of the bell underneath the table startled her so she almost dropped the lamp she was carrying.

"Oh, what's that? Who is that under the table?" she cried, then looking around she discovered that no one was missing, so who could it be behind the curtain ringing the bell. She, with the other girls, hastily retreated to the other side of the room vainly begging some of the others to look behind the curtain and see what was under there. No

one seemed to know, and Joe looked very innocent, so innocent that the girls soon suspected him.

"Joe, who is under the table?" said Minnie.

"Joe, we know it is your doing," said one of them again, stepping forward. "Tell us who it is."

"Look and see," said Joe; but as they moved a little nearer the loud ring of the bell caused them to retreat as rapidly as before. Now this time Joe had given so hard a jerk that he broke the string and he thought the little game was done. Just at that moment Keturah entered the door and trotting across the room, noticed only by Sadie, went behind the curtain. A moment later the bell again began ringing. Now it was Joe's turn to become astonished, for he had not noticed the kitten and he had no idea how the bell could ring since he had broken the string. He did not let on, however, since whatever it was it was helping him out with his trick.

"Oh! Sadie, you look," said Ruth at last.

"But I'm afraid," said Sadie.

"Oh, yes, go, Sadie, like a good girl," said another. "It won't hurt you."

"Why don't you look yourself?" suggested Joe.

"Joe, do tell us what it is!"

"How should I know?" said he innocently. "I don't know what's ringing the bell," and true enough he didn't. At last Sadie was persuaded to go, and after one peep she dropped the curtain, laughing heartily.

"What is it, Sadie?" they all cried in one breath.

"Why, it's Keturah," she cried, drawing back the curtain so they could see, and there sat the kitten looking up at the bell and now and then giving it a tap with its little paw, plainly enjoying this part of the Christmas exercises as much as anybody. She had come in while the bell was still swinging, and thinking it a very nice plaything, had stopped to amuse herself. What a big laugh they all had when Joe told his share in the fun and how the string broke, and how he wondered as well as the rest of them after that. If Sadie never thought it before, she certainly after that night thought that her kitten was the most wonderful one in the world.

CHAPTER II

AFTER the little excitement of Christmas was past, life in the Gray family settled back again into its old routine. The winter proved to be a severe one, the north winds and the ice and snow holding full sway until far into March. Mrs. Gray not being very well, and Sadie having contracted a severe cold, they were kept very close prisoners in the house for many long weeks. Sadie thought she had never before known such a long winter. She could not go outside with William now and follow him around, on account of her cold and the

heavy snows, and must content herself indoors with her lessons and playthings.

The lessons grew very tiresome sometimes, with no one to study with her; and the hard words the new speller contained! It was so different studying at home to what it had been at school where there were so many others and an incentive in studying that she might keep up and go ahead of her class. Now, however, if she did have her lesson well, there was no one to spell down and she would stand in just the same position in her class if she had a poor lesson as if she had a good one. She found it paid better, though, to have them well learned, for if she did not she had to sit right down and study them over again before she was allowed to do anything else. In the arithmetic, there was the dreadful multiplication table to learn. What a bugbear it has been to so many children! But easy or hard the lessons must all be learned, and besides her lessons she had many other little duties to do which took up her time, for Sadie's mamma was one of the old-fashioned kind who believed in teaching children to do useful things.

She had been teaching Sadie how to knit. Just plain knitting it had been at first, back and forth on two needles; but now she told Sadie that she was going to get some yarn and show her how to knit her stockings, and that, hereafter, she would expect her to knit all her own stockings. So she

set them up for her and showed her how to narrow and shape them, and told her that she must knit one inch each day. One of Sadie's little playmates back in the old home could knit nicely, even knitting hose for her papa and knowing how to make a double heel, which is quite a difficult task for the little fingers of a seven-year-old girl to do; and mamma told her it was time she was learning to do as well herself.

"And there is your quilt, Sadie," she said; "you must certainly get it done this winter, for you have had it on hand quite long enough." Making patchwork quilts had been the way Mamma Gray had taught all her girls how to sew. The soft pieces of calico were easy for their little fingers to sew, and she picked out the bright-colored pieces and made it very interesting to them, teaching them that they must be careful to make the seams just the same width and run them very straight, or else their blocks would not be even and nice; and also showing them how to take short and even stitches. Sadie had begun hers last year, and it was pieced in squares of red and white, nine-patch fashion. The red ones were scraps left of her red dresses that she had had since babyhood. And you may be sure if the seam was not very, very straight and the stitches short, she had to do it over again, for mamma was a nice seamstress and did not allow work going on around her that was only half done.

And so with all these various, and sometimes irksome duties, and with her pets and dolls, the long winter passed away and the first signs of spring, so eagerly and longingly watched for, began to appear. Such a relief it was to get out of the house, and so anxious was she for the flowers to come back, that ere the snows had all gone she was out searching for violets, weeks before the first spring violet dared raise its tiny blue face from under its winter cover.

Up-stairs in one corner of the room, when it became warm enough for her to play up there, Sadie fixed up for herself a tiny playhouse. She covered the walls of the little room with white, and put in her toy furniture, framing some small pictures in cardboard, and putting her smallest doll in the room; for the playhouse was too small for her largest one. What was her surprise one morning on coming up to play, to find everything in the utmost disorder, the pictures torn from the walls and scattered over the floor, Josephine tipped out of her chair face downward on the floor, and every article in the playroom awry. What could have done it! Nobody knew and none seemed able to guess, so there was nothing to do but go to work and straighten it up and wait for time to make known the culprit; if it ever did. Two or three times Sadie found the room in the same disorder, and still no clue remained of the mischief-maker, until one morning as she was going up to play,

Keturah went up with her, and bounding ahead of her into the room, began at once to jerk down pictures and knock chairs over. She seemed to think it fine fun and was entirely unconscious that she was doing anything that her mistress would not like, until Sadie caught her and scolded her, and with a box on either ear by way of emphasis, made her understand that she was very naughty. The little playhouse was never again molested.

One day Sadie was in the kitchen wiping the dishes for mamma, and carrying them from table to pantry to put them away. Keturah was at her heels mewing and rubbing against her and purring, then she would go away from her a little way and looking back would mew; and as Sadie did not come, she would return to her side again.

"Mamma, what can be the matter with Keturah? I have fed her well this morning, and still she mews around and stays right under my feet."

"She wants you to go somewhere with her. See how she goes away and then looks back and calls you. She is coaxing you to go with her. Go and see what she wants."

Sadie laid her dish-towel down and started, whereupon Keturah seemed very much delighted to think that she understood at last, and went running on before her, still looking back and watching her anxiously to see if she followed her all the way. Up the stairs she led her, and over to one corner of the room to a small box, and with a great

deal of purring and soft mewing, climbed into the box. A chorus of tiny voices greeted her as she entered, and Sadie, leaning over and peering into the box, saw, to her astonishment, a half dozen wee kittens. Some were black, some were black and white, and some were like Keturah herself. As she settled herself among them she looked up into Sadie's face proudly, as if to say, "Don't you think my baby kittens are sweet? Did you ever see such pretty kittens before?" And Sadie, looking down at them almost as proud as Keturah herself, thought she never had.

CHAPTER III

SADIE now had a new diversion in helping Keturah, as she thought, in taking care of the baby kittens, and in searching out a suitable name for each. There was the black and white one that certainly no name suited so well as Topsy, and the one a little darker was Mopsy, and this one must be called Spot, and that one Tiger, and another Glossy, and so on; despite the fact that Joe declared that no name could be more suitable for the black kitten than Belshazzar, and that the black and white one should be called Andrew Jackson, that Nebuchadnezzar was the ideal name for the spotted one, and that Abraham Lincoln should be the name of another. He sadly mixed up some

of the characters of ancient times with those in modern history and persisted, much to Sadie's disgust, in calling them such.

It was a great pleasure to watch them grow and to see them open their eyes for the first time, showing how wonderfully bright and blue they were; then later their first feeble attempts to play, their gradual increase in activity and nimbleness, until a more frolicsome lot of kittens could not be found. They were far more pleasure to her than her dolls, they were so full of life and could do so many cute little things. They became very much attached to Sadie as well as she to them, and followed her all about the house and yard. She dressed them up in her doll's clothes and put them to sleep in her doll's bed, and when she went to her swing down among the trees, they lay in her lap or by her side on the swingboard and played with the ropes or slept while she swung to and fro. They seemed to enjoy the swing quite as much as she herself. By and by as they grew older, Sadie reluctantly parted with them one by one, giving them to her little friends. They did not want to keep so many cats around, and new arrivals were of frequent occurrence. Keturah's progeny became so numerous that Sadie had much difficulty in supplying names for all of them, and the rest of the family began to look upon her with disfavor. So one day when a neighbor took quite a notion to her, as she lay in her box with a quartet

of frolicsome kittens tumbling over her, and begged to be allowed to take them home with her, they consented. Keturah was now several years old and it seemed very, very hard to give her up, but they thought it best, and Sadie with tears in her eyes, watched them fasten her and all the kittens into a small box, ready for her journey. They promised to take good care of her, which was one comfort. It was midwinter when they took her away and the ground was covered with a deep snow which remained all winter. When the first spring thaw came and the snows were nearly all melted, the boys came into the house one evening with this news:

"Sadie, I think I saw Keturah down at the barn. I just got a glimpse of her and couldn't tell for certain whether it was her or not, but it looked very much like her, and if it is, isn't it wonderful how she could find the way back? It must be two or three months since we sent her away, and then she was shut up in a box so that she could not see which way she was going."

Sadie did not wait to hear any more, but catching up a shawl, threw it over her head, and started on the run for the barn. Sure enough it was her kitty. What a good little mother Keturah had been. She had stayed in the strange place all winter and nursed and cared for her kittens until they no longer needed her care, then she sought her old home and friends and was welcomed home

again. She remained with the family a year or two, then Mrs. Gray gave her to a neighbor about a mile distant. This time there were five little kittens just big enough to walk; however, it was in the summer now. Nearly a week later, one night about one o'clock, Sadie's mamma was awakened from her sleep by a familiar mewing and scratching at the door, and on going to the door, what should she find but poor Keturah with one of the little kittens by her side, and both almost tired out. Poor thing, she had brought it all the way, a long mile! Mamma took them in and fixed a place for them to rest. The next night she brought another one and the third night she brought one and attempted to bring a second. She left their place, the neighbor said, with the last one about dawn, as they were up and saw her start. This is how she managed: She would walk a little way down the road and sit down and call the kitten to come to her, and when it reached her, she would go on ahead and call again; then when the kitten became too tired she would pick it up and carry it a piece, and so on all the way. She, however, never reached home with this one, and it was supposed that some dogs killed it. Sadie hunted all up and down the road for any trace of it, but could find none. They went to the neighbor's house and got the remaining one and carried it home so that Keturah did not have to go back any more.

"I shall never give her away any more," said Sadie's mamma. "As faithful as she has been to us and to her home, she shall stay with us as long as she lives." And she kept her word. Keturah remained an honored member of the household for many years.

As the years went by, she and Sadie grew more and more attached. She grew to know the sound of Sadie's footstep, so that when Sadie entered the house on her return from school Keturah would bound down the stairs to meet and welcome her; and Sadie could not refuse to take her on her lap and caress her, a few minutes at least, before she went to do her evening work.

Nine years went by after Sadie's papa brought Keturah home to her in his rain-coat pocket, and then one day in the early spring she took very sick. Sadie made catnip tea for her and tried to doctor her up, but it did no good, and Easter morning when papa got up to build the fire he found Keturah dead. Do you wonder that they all felt sad to lose such a good, faithful friend as Keturah had always been? Papa made a box and Sadie wrapped her dead pet carefully and laid her in it, and in the afternoon they took her out and buried her in a pretty, quiet spot at the foot of one of the forest-trees.

CHAPTER IV

IN TELLING you of Sadie's pets, I must not forget to tell you about her pet fish, or perhaps I should not say these were Sadie's, for they belonged to all the members of the family, and, more especially, to Joe. When I mention pet fish, I imagine you will at once think of a nice glass aquarium filled with water and set in a sunny window, and in it a half-dozen or more goldfish. But no, you have not guessed right this time. Sadie's aquarium was an altogether different kind. One summer when the weather had been extremely dry and hot, and most of the wells had gone dry, brother Joe concluded that should such a drought occur again, it would be quite an advantage on the farm to have a pond to aid in furnishing water for the stock. So the first leisure time that he found he began work on the hillside in the pasture north of the house. It was quite an undertaking and took lots of hard work, but it was finally accomplished and by the next season the rains had filled it. A row of willows and cottonwoods was planted on its west bank, and one day, returning from a hunting and fishing expedition down on the river, he brought back with him several dozen small perch, catfish, and sunfish, and put them in the pond. He fed them a little at first, but did not give them much attention, and then for a long time he was so busy they were entirely neglected until several seasons went

by. One summer morning he called Sadie from the kitchen and told her he wanted her to go with him to feed the fish.

"Do you want to go?" he called.

"Of course," said Sadie, "but I didn't know you fed them. What do you feed them?"

"Get some cornbread out of the pantry, two or three large pieces, and come on."

Sadie hastened to the pantry and gathered in several pieces of the bread, then snatching her sunbonnet from its nail, was soon running along at his side eagerly plying him with questions as they went down the hill and through the pasture gate and up to where the row of willows and cottonwoods made the banks of the pond a shady and cool retreat.

"Why do you feed the fish, Joe? I thought they lived on bugs and things they got out of the water."

"Well, they do, but in these little ponds there is not enough for them to eat, and, if they are not fed, they eat the little fish. You see," he continued, "I began wondering not long ago if they were all dead, because we have never taken any pains to feed them as we should, so I thought I would see. I took some meal and bread over and threw it in and kept real still and presently here they came and feasted. The next day I took some more and they soon got so they were not afraid of me at all, and now they will come and eat out of my hand."

"Oh, Joe, will they, really? I didn't know fish would ever, ever do that. I didn't know they would get so tame."

"Well, they do, as you will soon see, but now we are nearing the pond, so don't make too much noise or you will frighten them all away."

They sat down close to the edge of the pond, and Joe threw in some bread.

"There they come; see that little one," he whispered softly.

"Yes, and there comes another!" whispered Sadie, excitedly. "Let me throw some bread in; may I?"

"Yes, here's some; now watch," and Joe took a small piece between his fingers and held it under the water. Soon two or three collected near. They were tiny little perch, not more than two or three inches long. Finally one became bolder, and coming close, nibbled from his fingers.

"Oh, ain't they cute, and I didn't know fish would ever do that," Sadie cried.

"There, you have frightened them away," said Joe.

They threw in all their crumbs, and by this time quite a number were in sight. They had been quite still for some time, watching the little, gleaming bodies as they whisked back and forth, then Joe leaned close to her and whispered very low, "Look, Sadie, and do not move; there come the little catfish."

"Oh, where?" said Sadie, looking out into the water.

"Here, right close down in the bottom. See, they are little black fish, not more than an inch long, and see the little horn they have. They get their food out of the mud in the bottom of the pond. They are gathering out the crumbs now that have fallen to the bottom that the perch did not get."

"Oh, I see them," cried Sadie, excitedly, with a quick movement forward, but her voice and movement had frightened them and they were all gone in an instant.

"You see," said Joe, "they are not so easily tamed as the perch and sunfish. They are very timid and you can hardly ever get to see them unless you are very still; but let us go now, for our bread is all gone and they have all they want to eat to-day."

"Oh, aren't they nice? I shall want to come to see them every day."

"You can come as often as you want to. They should be fed at least once a day."

So it came about that the pond was very frequently visited by all and the feeding of the fish became a favorite pastime. Visitors coming to the farm were sure to be taken to the pond to see the fish.

The little fish soon became remarkably tame, so much so that Sadie and Joe could catch them in

their hands. Even the large ones became quite tame, perch six or seven inches long coming up and eating out of their hands. There were three perch of this size that Sadie used to have a great deal of amusement with. She would put her hand down in the water and stick out her finger, and the three would circle about. Presently one of them would come up and try to nibble her finger, but just before it did so she would drop her finger and hit it lightly under the jaw, when it would whirl around and whisk away a couple of feet, whirl as quickly again and come back and try it again with the same result each time. Then one of the others would try. Sometimes she would get worms or catch a cricket or grasshopper and hold it out an inch or two above the water, and the fish would jump clear out of the water to catch them. One day Sadie had her hands down in the water encircling and trying to catch a small perch; her eye intent on this fish, she did not notice any other. A quick movement forward and out of the water and she felt a fish struggling in her hands, but a sharp sting on her finger made her drop it in a hurry, to find that she had caught a catfish nearly four inches long which had horned her on the finger just at the root of the nail. It was bleeding, and hurt like the sting of a wasp. She put the catfish back in the water again, but after that when she tried to catch the fish with her hands she looked to see if there were any catfish near.

Do you not think these were nice pets? Every one that came to the farm enjoyed going to see them, and the family were too fond of them to allow a hook and line to be used to catch them or even that they should be used for food.

CHAPTER V

Now I shall tell you of some of Sadie's pets of the feathered tribe, without which the old farm would have been bereft of one of its greatest charms—her birds. Not yellow-hued songsters, whose only homes are narrow cages of wire and their only exercise that of hopping from perch to perch and from floor to the tiny swing at the top; and whose glimpses of the bright, blue sky are through panes of glass or from some obscure corner of the porch—no, not these. Her birds were the ones whose homes were in the boundless forests, whose flitting wings were unconfined to limited spaces by gilded wires. They could enjoy without fear the liberty and freedom that God had intended that every being of his creation should enjoy. She loved them all and claimed them as her own; alike the snow-birds that perched outside her window or gathered at the door to feed upon the crumbs thrown out for their benefit, the red-birds, the martins, the bluebirds, and even the bluejays whose shrill notes in the boxelder-tree at the corner of the house were anything but musical,

the whippoorwill whose song echoed through the woods far into the night, and the little merry-hearted wren whose happy carol just outside of the old-fashioned window of her bedroom was the first to awaken her on summer mornings from her slumbers.

There was at one time a canary put into her charge, but I must say that it cost her many a pang when she looked at it in the narrow confines of its cage, and she longed to open the door and let it roam at will.

Did you ever think, my little readers, how much happiness we may take from the lives of these little creatures? Did you ever think that liberty is the most priceless gift God ever gave, not to man only, but to all his creatures? The birds and the beasts have no language by which they may tell us how priceless it is to them, but we do not believe that it is any the less so than it is to us. Sadie, as I have told you, loved the birds very much, and there was one other place she did not like to see them besides in cages, and where they always looked pitiful to her, and that was perched upon ladies' fashionable hats and bonnets.

"Why kill the birdies," she used to say, "to beautify your hats?" "They are pretty, of course they are, but they are not alive and can not sing any more nor fly about and be happy; and to adorn your hat costs one creature its life."

Ah, how true this is, and are we not thoughtless

and selfish to allow the lives of innocent beings to be sacrificed that our whims may be gratified, all for the sake of fashion? There are many pretty things with which we may make our hats dainty and becoming without this sacrifice; the pretty ribbons, chiffon, and flowers will make them just as pretty, if we only thought so and would turn a deaf ear to the dictates of fashion in this regard.

"If my brothers are too kind to rob a bird's nest or shoot birds for sport," said Sadie, "or even will not shoot them as others do because they take the cherries, I will try and be equally kind and never wear one on my hat, no matter what the fashion is."

What do you think about it, my little readers? How pretty the thoughts expressed by the poet, Longfellow, in his ballad, "Birds of Killingworth," two of the stanzas of which are as follows:

Do you ne'er think what wondrous beings these?
Do you ne'er think who made them, and who taught
The dialect they speak where melodies
Alone are the interpreters of thought?
Whose household words are songs in many keys,
Sweeter than instrument of man e'er caught!
Whose habitations in the tree-tops even
Are half-way houses on the road to heaven!

Think, every morning, when the sun peeps through
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,
How jubilant the happy birds renew
Their old, melodious madrigals of love!
And when you think of this, remember, too,
'Tis always morning somewhere, and above
The awakening continents, from shore to shore,
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore.

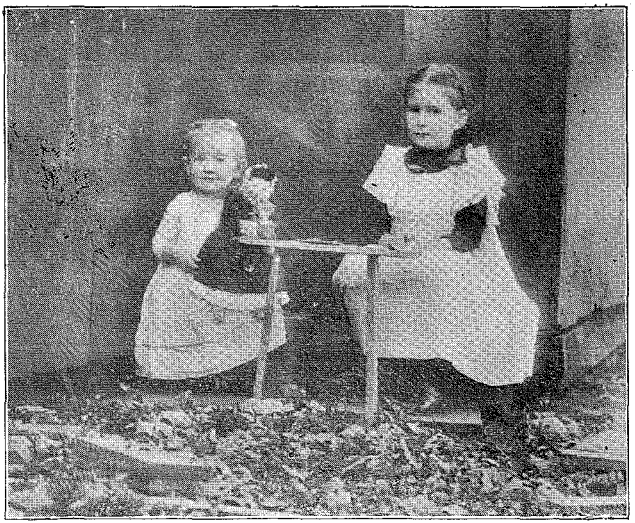
For the martins, a large and comfortable box of Joe's manufacture was placed on a pole west of the house. It was divided into ten parts or rooms, each room large enough for a good-sized nest and a pair of birds. It was shingled on top and looked like a real house in miniature. This soon became the summer home of at least ten pairs of martins. Sometimes the bluebirds arrived first in the spring and took possession, and when the martins arrived a week or two later there was a troublesome time between them; but the martins always succeeded in getting possession at last and the bluebirds had to seek shelter elsewhere. Then the nest-building began, and for awhile there was not time for anything, all were so busy, but when August came and the little ones were trying to learn to fly; oh, then such a twittering and calling and chattering as would be heard. One day an exceptional tumult was going on among the martins. There was crying and calling and such a clatter as to almost deafen one. Sadie and her mamma went out to see what was the matter. They soon found a young martin on the ground. It had either fallen out of the nest or had attempted to fly and failed, and the rest were all fluttering about trying to get it back into the nest again. They picked the little thing up carefully, and the ladder being near, Sadie placed it against the pole that held the box and climbed up with it and restored it to its safe retreat once more; soon everything was quiet again.

The little brown wrens were her favorites among all the birds. They, like the martins and bluebirds, seek sheltered places in which to build their nests. Not far from the house an old hand cornplanter had been thrown into the branches of an oak-tree, and the cover remaining half open, afforded a shelter where one pair of wrens made their home for many summers. Also, they built under the eaves of the house, and Joe made a small box for them with two apartments which he placed in the shade of the cherry-tree not far from the kitchen porch. They liked this place very well, only for one reason, and that was on account of the cat. She often sat out on the back porch, or took her afternoon nap there, and whenever they saw her they would perch themselves high above her reach and sit and scold and jabber away at her for an hour at a time, trying to drive her away. One summer a pair of wrens had just begun building their nest in this place, and had done several days' work on their home, when puss caught one of them and killed it. For several days afterwards the other one sat around its unfinished home in the cherry-tree and mournfully lamented and called for its mate. Then, after three or four days, it was gone and everything was silent around the little home. Nearly a week later it returned with another mate, and both set to work to complete the little home nest, which was accomplished in a few days.

And now I have told you about Sadie and some of her pets, but, as I said at the beginning, I shall not attempt to tell you about all of them as that would take too long. If any of my little readers have pets I hope they will have as much pleasure with them as Sadie did with hers. However, let us never forget that although they are given to us for our pleasure we in turn should do our part in making their lives pleasant and happy; giving them all the kind care and consideration that is due any of God's creatures.

MAKING MUD PIES

Two chubby little forms out in the garden oh, so very busy making mud pies. Such lots of baking they have to do and must get done before supper. Two tiny golden heads bend eagerly over the pan in which Dot is doing so much careful mixing, for



"DINNER'S READY."

Dot is the oldest and must do most of the work. She is four and Dimple is not yet two. Now they have it mixed and twenty tiny fingers are busily making it into cakes of all sizes and shapes, and rolling out crusts for the make-believe pies, while two tongues keep up a constant chatter. There is

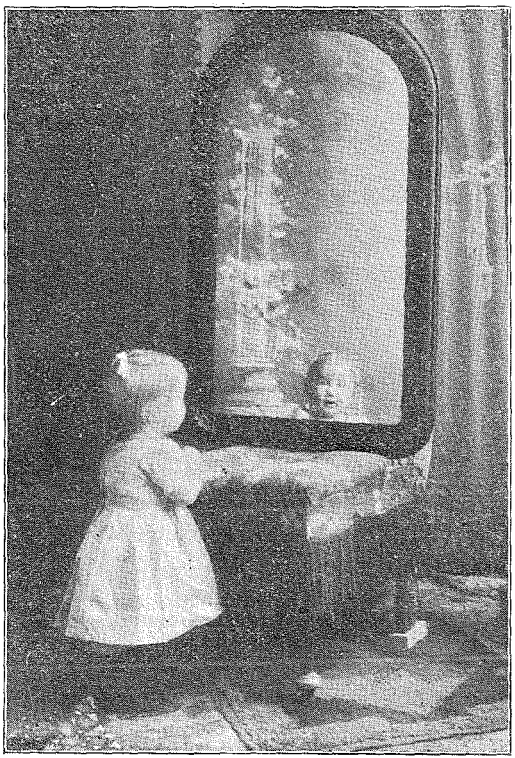
dirt on their rosy cheeks and on their bare white arms, but what do they care for that, since they soon have a long row of pies set out in the sun to bake, and who can tell half the fun there is in making mud pies? Happy little tots are they, because they love each other so and are always together. They get along nicely together, too, seldom quarreling.

Sometimes in the afternoon Dimple takes a nap and then Dot gets lonesome. "Oh, mamma," she says, "I want somebody to play with," and mamma tells her she can go and play with Lily, the little girl next door. "But I don't want to. I want Dimple to wake up. I don't want to play with any one but her. I'm lonesome when she sleeps," and when Dimple finally wakes up again they have a lively romp.

But one day little Dimple took very, very ill, and each day she grew worse and worse, until finally God thought best to come and take her away to live with him where there is no pain or sickness, and where she would always be well and happy, but oh! how lonely the house seemed to mamma and papa and Dot after she went away, and now there was no one to help Dot make her mud pies. Sometimes her little playmate next door comes over and plays with her, but she misses little Dimple,—dear, tender, little Dimple, whose loving little arms were always put up to comfort her whenever she was in trouble.

SHE COULD EVEN PUT HER IN HER DOLL-BUGGY AND TAKE HER A RIDE.

A long time went by, and then there came to fill the vacant place another blue-eyed baby sister, and



BIG ENOUGH TO TODDLE ABOUT.

Dot's eyes grew round and big with delight. Such a tiny one she was, that Dot could hold her in her arms and carry her about, and she could even put

her in her doll-buggy and take her a ride. But baby slept so much and grew so fast through the long summer days that soon she was able to sit up, and the next summer she was toddling about the yard almost big enough to help big sister make mud pies, for Dot likes to make mud pies as well as ever, if she is seven years old, and she loves her tiny, blue-eyed sister very dearly.

HOW IT HAPPENED

IT WAS a warm summer day. Trixie had put on her bonnet and gone out to play in the warm sunshine. Bowser was too sleepy and lazy to play and Puss was either taking a nap in some out-of-the-way corner or else she had gone off on a hunt for mice, for she was nowhere to be found; papa and brother were out on the back porch at work and mamma and sisters were sewing in the sitting-room, so Trixie was left to amuse herself.

She was tired of playing with her dolls, so she tried to wake up Bowser, but he was not in the mood to play, so she gave that up. She chased a butterfly or two and came back into the house. "Oh dear! I wish I knew what to do," she sighed. "Oh, there's an empty spool, I'll fasten a string to it and go and see if I can't find one of the kittens to

play with." So jumping up she got the spool and a string and started in search of the kittens. She found the kittens sleeping snugly curled up in the warm sunshine on the south side of the old crib.

"Come, kitty, and play with me awhile," she said. Kitty didn't like to very well at first, but finally she got one of them after her spool and they had a race for the house. Then she stopped running and walked slowly backwards watching the playful antics of the kitten after the spool. But alas! Trixie had forgotten that it had rained the night before, and that at the corner of the house there sat a tub brim full of rainwater. But she never thought of it and in a moment her feet struck the tub and back she went into it and there she was unable to move with only her head and feet above the water. Her screams soon brought papa and brother to the rescue, who picked her out, not hurt, but only frightened and a little mad at their laughter, for she was such a ridiculous little figure when they pulled her out, all dripping, that no one could help laughing. And the kitten? Well, the kitten had returned posthaste to the crib, and the spool held no more attraction for either it or Trixie the remainder of that afternoon.

SUNSHINE

I WANT to tell you of such a pleasant room that I have seen. It was not the most beautiful room in the world, nor the most costly, nor did it have such fine furniture in it. It just had four straight walls, and ordinary plain doors and windows, and was plainly furnished.

"Now I wonder," says some one, "why you think this is such a pleasant room. I have seen lots of rooms like this."

Well, perhaps you have, but there seems to be something different about this room that makes it seem so pleasant to me. How warm and cosy it looked on cold winter nights as we entered! Sometimes we would hear a good deal of noise as we came to the door, and we would wonder what was the matter, but we soon forgot all about that when we entered and found four happy children playing "hide and seek," or "pussy wants a corner," or laughing at a funny story mamma was reading, only stopping their fun long enough to cry, "Come in, Cousin. We are having so much fun!" and we were soon ready to join them in their sport.

Then after we had finished this sport, Brown Eyes, drawing his stool up to his desk, and getting his material out, would begin to write his essay on the pig, the chicken, the cow, or some other animal, or a biography of General Washington, or Andrew Jackson, or Alexander Hamilton, as the case might

be, which he must have ready to read at school to-morrow afternoon. Hazel Eyes and Black Eyes do not have to study lessons, so they get out their work-baskets, quilt-blocks, needles, and thimbles, and run races sewing, while Blue Eyes, the youngest, goes to playing with her doll, and mamma devotes a short time to her music. After a half hour's sewing the girls begin to get restless and wish they could write some, like brother is writing, so Black Eyes suggests they write a letter to papa, who has been gone away from home a long time on a mission. Then each one of them hunts up a paper and pencil and mamma helps them a little, and so some of the comfort and cheer from that little room goes like rays of warm sunlight to papa far away over the mountains.

By the time they had finished their letters, Brown Eyes has finished his essay and Blue Eyes is tired, so Mamma fixes the fire, locks the doors, and they all go up-stairs, and soon four little white-robed figures are kneeling, asking God to bless Papa and Mamma and all the "chillies," as little Blue Eyes says, and presently all are tucked in bed and are soon sound asleep, and the pleasant room is deserted. And—why, it isn't the room that's so pleasant after all. I think it must be something about Mamma and Brown Eyes and Hazel Eyes and Black Eyes and Blue Eyes that makes it seem so pleasant. I wonder how it is. I've heard of people that could manufacture sun-

shine, and I guess that's what they must be, manufacturers of sunshine, and that is why the room always looks so bright and cheery when they are in it.

Of course they are a great deal bigger and some older than they were when we were there, and they are all going to school now, even to little Blue Eyes, and we shouldn't wonder if we stepped in there some evening if we should find them all as busy as bees getting their lessons for the morrow.

The years are going swiftly by, and Brown Eyes, Hazel Eyes, Black, Eyes, and Blue Eyes will soon be "grown up," and while they are very busy studying and learning, let us hope that although they learn to do many new and useful things, that they will not forget how to manufacture sunshine, but will spare a few moments each day to send a few rays to those who do not know how to make their own or who have little sunshine in their lives.

When they read this I wonder what they will say.

WATERING THE HORSES

"JOHN, are you going to water the horses now?" called Lucy, as she ran down to where her brother was unhitching the horses from the wagon. "Yes." "Well, then, please may I go with you and ride Bill?" "I guess so, if you're not afraid of falling off." "Oh, I'm not. I've ridden him lots of times

before." "All right; come here, then, and let me help you on."

Lucy was very fond of the horses and always begged for a ride whenever she thought there was any chance of getting one. Half way down the hill from the barn stood a large tree whose branches extended over the path. "Duck your head, Lucy," shouted John, who was ahead, and had leaned forward to avoid the branches. Lucy did so, and would have passed under all right but for her hair, which hung in one long braid down her back, and as she stooped it caught in one of the branches.

"Oh! oh! oh!" screamed Lucy. "Whoa! whoa! what's the matter?" cried John; and looking back he saw Lucy in a terrible plight. "Whoa, Bill! whoa, there!" he shouted to her horse, and the horse stopped just in time to save Lucy from being pulled clear off. John laughed as he unfastened her hair and pushed her forward on the horse. "You came near to getting hung by your hair that time," he said. "Why didn't you say whoa and draw the rein instead of screaming in that sort of fashion? It's a wonder the horse didn't run away." "Oh, I couldn't think to say whoa, I was so frightened. Goodness, but it nearly pulled my head off." "I guess you won't want to ride any more, will you?" asked John. "Yes, I will, but I don't want to ride under any more trees," she replied laughing, "unless I have my hair cut off or covered up some way."

THE CHILDREN'S FISHING PARTY

MOLLY, Fred, and Joe Dayton lived in a pretty little farmhouse on each side of which were great, shady trees, and down the hill back of the house was an apple orchard where in the fall they gathered in the red-cheeked winesaps and the golden pippins. Still farther back were the woods where they often went to gather nuts. It was down here in the edge of the woods where the brook ran gurgling along over stones and rough places that they liked to play the best. In one place it fell from a shelving rock two or three feet, which the children called the Niagara Falls. On the bank close to this little waterfall stood two or three trees, one of which leaned far out over the water and almost touched the bank on the other side; so nearly did it touch that the boys sometimes playing that the brook was swollen by the rains would cross over on the tree.

In among these trees Molly had her playhouse; and here almost every day that was warm and sunshiny she brought her broken dishes, her dolls and toys to play.

One day the children's little cousins, Ada and Etta, came out from the city for a few weeks' visit with them. The first day of their visit they had planned to spend running around showing them their pets and all the prettiest places on the farm and also to play awhile in their playhouse by the

brook; but when they awoke that morning it was raining and rained so much during the day that they could not leave the house, so they were obliged to content themselves playing in the house. The next day it was still too wet to go far, so they took their playthings and climbed into the barn loft and played on the hay. But the next day was warm and dry and away they all went to the brook.

"Oh, what a pretty place!" cried Etta. "Isn't it just lovely! and oh, are there ever any fish in this brook?"

"No, I guess not," said Joe.

"Why, yes, Uncle John caught one last spring," said Molly.

"Oh, yes, there have been a few caught here, but one can hardly ever catch any, and then they are just little ones."

"Let's play we had a fishing party," cried Ada, "and we can have some fun whether we catch any fish or not, and we girls will fix up lunch baskets and make believe there are lots of fish here."

"All right," said Fred, "we'll run down and cut some poles and get some strings and you girls put up the lunches."

Away went the boys, and the girls ran to the little playhouse to put up some make-believe lunches in baskets made of hickory-leaves. The boys soon had some poles cut on which they tied strings and tied bent pins for hooks and worms for bait.

Molly brought a pail to put the fish in and soon all was ready and the boys dropped in the hooks.

"Now, you must all keep still," said Joe, "or we never will get any." They had been sitting for some time very quietly when Fred said excitedly, "I do believe I've got a nibble. Look at the string move."

"Well, jerk it out, then, quick, before you lose it!" cried Joe, "and don't sit there like a goose and watch the line move." Fred jerked, but came near to losing his balance and falling into the water, he was so excited. His hat fell off and went floating down the stream, but he didn't see it, for there sure enough on his hook on the grass was a tiny fish.

"Oh! oh! you did catch a fish, a real fish, after all! Oh, isn't it cute!" cried the girls. "Let's not kill it, but put it in the bucket and pour some water on it and keep it." They dipped some water from the brook into the pail and Joe pulled the fish off the hook and put it in it.

"Oh, Fred, look at your hat; it's floating away down the stream," cried Ada, and Fred went chasing away after his hat, the others all laughing at him. "Now, let's all get still and see if we can't catch another one," said Molly. "Humph! they're all frightened away with all the noise we made, if there are any more in here to frighten," said Joe.

"Let's try, anyway." They tried again and again but in vain, but at last just as they were

about to give up, Joe caught one. This they put in the pail with the other one. By this time they were beginning to get pretty hungry, and as their make-believe lunches did not go far towards satisfying their hunger, they gathered up their things and went to the house for dinner, well pleased with their morning's work.

They put the fishes in a small tub of water and had great fun feeding them bread and digging worms for them every day. In a day or two they became great pets and were so tame that they would take the food from their hands and would nibble their fingers.

They gave them to Ada and Etta when they went home, and they took them with them and kept them as pets for a long time.

PRINCE

PRINCE was a little black spaniel with long curly hair, big brown eyes, and a short bushy tail. He came into the possession of the Duke family when he was about a year old, or at least that was what the gentleman, who gave him to Willie, said his age was. It was one day when Willie Duke and his father had gone to town that they chanced to meet this gentleman, Mr. Brown, on the street and Prince was with him. While the two gentle-

men were talking, Willie and Prince became acquainted, and Willie thought he was the prettiest little dog he ever saw.

"Well, Willie," said Mr. Brown presently, "what do you think of Prince? Don't you think he is a pretty nice dog?"

"Oh, I like him," said Willie.

"Well, you may have him if you want him," said Mr. Brown. "I like him myself, but I am going away and he will be too much bother."

"Do you suppose mother would care if I took him home?" asked Willie.

"I don't know, I am sure, but we can take him home and if she doesn't want him about we can give him to some one," replied his father.

Mother wasn't exactly pleased when she saw Willie coming home with a dog, but big brothers Joe and Walter and little sister Sadie thought Prince was so nice that all of them together prevailed on her to allow them to keep him. So Prince became a great pet with Willie and Sadie, and indeed the older ones played with him almost as much as the children.

When Joe went to town, or off to the woods to chop, or to the field, he would put Prince in the seat beside him and he would sit up as straight and bark at the people whom they would meet, as much as to say, "Good morning, my friends, don't you think I am quite a nice dog?" and the people would turn their heads and look back at him as

long as they could see him. They tried to teach him to help get the pigs back into the pen when those venturesome and most trying little animals escaped, but Prince was slow in that respect. In fact, Prince was a little lazy when it came to the pigs, and he thought it much more fun to take a morning ride in the wagon than to bother with troublesome pigs; and, no doubt, a great many people think the same thing. Like some folks also, he was not very lazy when it came to going fishing, and he could walk and run for miles and miles out on a hunting expedition. He fairly danced around when he saw the boys get the gun and prepare for a hunt, and would frisk and bark around in great glee. And when they brought down the game he was the first one to reach it.

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Duke one day soon after Prince had come into the family, "that we don't get many eggs lately. I don't understand the reason why, for we have been getting several until just lately, and now there are few."

"Perhaps it's the rats," suggested Willie.

"I am sure I don't know what it can be, but there is surely something taking the eggs."

"Well, we'll watch, mother, and see if we can't catch the thief," said one of the boys.

A day or two after this Joe and Prince returned from the woods rather late for dinner and both they and the horses were tired and hungry. As Joe returned with the horses from the watering-

trough and was entering the barn, he happened to look towards the hen-coop, which was but a little distance from the barn, and just as he did so Prince came out licking his lips as though he had just been having a good meal.

"Mother," said Joe, as he sat down to the table to the lunch his mother was placing for him, "I think I know now where the eggs go, and—well, I am almost sure of it."

"Where?" she asked.

"Prince is eating them."

"Prince?" she echoed.

"The very one. I saw him coming out of the coop just a few moments ago, and I am almost sure he had been helping himself."

"Well, well! I am sorry, and I don't really know what we shall do about it. He is a nice little dog, but I really can't stand that. If it is he we shall have to do something with him, because I don't want him around if he steals like that."

"Just wait, mother, I believe I can cure him of stealing the eggs, and not hurt him either. And if I can, we can keep him, can't we?"

"Oh, certainly, you can keep him if you can cure him of it, but I don't believe you can teach him any better."

"I'll try. Have you got any of that liniment or medicine that I had a dose of once, and that is so disagreeable to take?"

"Yes; why?"

"I'll put some of that in an egg this evening. It won't hurt him, but only make his mouth smart and burn a little, and I don't think he will want to try any more eggs."

So in the evening he took an egg, and making a small hole in one end of it, he emptied part of the contents out, and then carefully and without spilling any on the outside, filled up the space with the medicine and stuck the shell back on again. He then placed it where he thought Prince would be most likely to find it. In the morning the egg was gone.

"Now we will see whether it was Prince that got it or not," said Joe, and he went and got an egg and laid it down in front of Prince. "Here, Prince, don't you want an egg? See, here is one." But poor Prince gave the egg one look and slunk away like a guilty thief, and mother was not troubled for lack of eggs for her puddings after that on Prince's account, for as far as they knew he never touched another egg, and whenever he saw one he would drop his tail and walk away crestfallen. All were glad that he had been so easily cured of this habit and that they could still keep him, for, with all his faults, Prince was a patient, affectionate little animal and loved them all dearly.

Once when the boys were trying to cross the creek, swollen by the spring rains to a swift and dangerous current which carried the horses from off their feet and took buggy and all down the

stream, drowning the horses and almost drowning the boys, little Prince stayed right with them in the water, and though he was not big enough to help any, he never left the water until the boys were both safely out upon the land.

He was with Sadie a great deal in her outdoor sports, and she passed many a happy hour with him, teaching him to drive like a horse. She would fasten a small pasteboard-box upon his back and put her doll in it and take it many a ride. She soon taught him the words "get up" and "whoa" so that he would do just as she told him. Away they would go, Prince trotting along and the box and doll bouncing up and down upon his back and sometimes sliding off. Sometimes, too, he would get rather tired of this and concluded he didn't want to play horse any more, and so he would just quietly sit down or lie down, and dolly would take another tumble. Then Sadie would have a great time getting him to go again. No amount of scolding would ever make Prince do anything, but if she would pat him and coax and fondle him for a little while he was soon ready again to do her bidding. They tried to teach him to shake hands, and sometimes he would offer his paw, but Sadie could never get him to offer his right one, but he would always offer his left one. She said it was because his left one was a little lame and he did not like to stand on it. If any of the family were gone, Prince always missed

them, and was so glad to see them when they returned home, running to meet them and barking them a welcome home. A faithful little friend was Prince, and one still remembered.

STORY OF A LITTLE FLOWER

"AH ME," sighed a tiny yellow flower that grew at the foot of an old oak-tree, "how lonely and dreary I am! How utterly worthless is my life! I am of no use while everything else is useful. The old tree that towers so far above me is strong and powerful; it has stood the fierce storms for many years. The fresh, green grass grows thickly around me and the gentle cows and the pretty, playful lambs stretch themselves upon its soft, green carpet and munch its tender blades with delight. The merry little brook goes bounding down the hill cooling and cheering everything that comes near its course. The rocks and stones are used for building houses and wells, immense in structure. They are as old as the earth and have great knowledge, while I, poor I, know nothing."

"Yes," said the old tree, "you are worthless. You could not even live were you not protected by me. Were I as puny and worthless as you are, I would hide away where no one would ever see me." And the grass and the rocks and the brook joined

with the tree in taunting the poor little flower and made it feel very lonely, so it crouched up as close as it could to the roots of the old tree and passed weary days in loneliness and seclusion, hardly daring to raise its head lest something might tease it.

But by and by there came a day, a bright, sunshiny day when a little girl came that way and sat down on an old stone under the tree.

She had walked a long way from town out into the country and was now on her road back and stopped to rest her tired feet on the soft grass.

"Oh, what a beautiful place!" she cried in ecstasy. "Oh, if mother and Hulda could only see it! I must take something from here for them and tell them all about it." After resting a while and looking around her with delight, she suddenly spied the little flower half hidden by the great roots of the old tree. "Oh, you pretty little yellow thing!" she cried. "I must take you home with me sure." And dropping down by the side of it, she dug it up, being very careful to keep the dirt about its roots. She then ran down to the brook and happening to find an old rusty can she filled it with fresh, moist soil from the bank of the brook and placed the flower in it.

"Oh, how pretty you look!" she said, kissing it tenderly, "and how glad Hulda will be to see you."

She then placed it carefully under her apron to shelter it from the hot sun and trudged patiently along on her journey.

"I wonder where I am going," thought the flower. "I am so glad she likes me. Perhaps I may be of some use yet. I do hope so."

They had been going along for quite a while when they reached the noisy town. The flower was afraid at first. She had never heard so much noise. It was such a change from the quiet country to the busy town that it frightened her.

At last the little girl stopped at the door of a small but neat-looking house and went in. She ran up to a bed in the corner where a little girl lay and drawing the flower from under her apron placed it in her hands. "Look, Hulda, and see what I have brought you!"

"Oh! oh! isn't it pretty. Mamma, mamma, do come here and see what Bertha has brought me," cried Hulda.

The mother, who was sitting by the window sewing, arose and crossed the room to Hulda's bedside.

"Indeed it is, darling," she answered. "Ah! it makes me think of the country and the little cottage where we used to live."

"Where did you find it, Bertha?" asked Hulda.

"Oh, I found it in the loveliest place. I wish you and mamma could only see it. It was under a great big tree all alone and I thought you would like to have it so much that I dug it up and brought it for you."

"I am so glad you did," said Hulda.

And so it was placed on a little table in front of the window close by Hulda's bedside, where it was taken good care of and where it was very happy to know that it cheered her through her long illness with its bright presence. The room was small and plainly furnished, but very neat and clean.

Hulda loved the little flower and told it all her secrets and although it could not understand her they made it very happy.

Summer and winter passed away and when spring again returned, the little family sold their house in town and removed to a small cottage in the country not far from the old tree where the tiny flower once lived. And it now occupies a favorite corner in their flower-garden, where every summer Bertha and Hulda cull its sweet blossoms with others, arrange them in bouquets, and sell them. And so the little flower has learned that there is nothing God makes, be it ever so small, but what it may be useful.

DOT'S LESSON

"WHAT are you doing, Dot?" "Putting this paper into my bank." "Don't do that; banks are to put pennies in and not for paper and trash like that." Presently mamma went into the kitchen on some errand and left four-year-old Dot to herself. She

thought no more about it until an hour or two later when picking up the playthings from the floor she noticed that Dot's bank was full of paper.

DOT.

"Who put this paper in your bank, Dot?" "I did, mamma." "Didn't you hear mamma tell you not to do that?" "Yes." "Then why didn't you mind me?" "Why, mamma, you wasn't lookin' was you?" "No, but then you must mind mamma when she isn't looking the same as any other time." "Why,

mamma, other little girls don't mind their mammas when they are not looking, do they?" said Dot innocently. "If they don't they ought. When mammas tell their little girls to do anything, or not to do it, they should mind whether she is watching them or not. If mamma doesn't see, God does, and it makes him very sorry to see his little girls naughty and disobedient to their mammas."

JOE

A STORY FOR BOYS

THE afternoon sun of a midsummer day shone warm and bright upon the picturesque landscape of the western country. High hills, assuming such proportions as to almost deserve the name of mountains, rose by long, gradual slopes from the surrounding country and formed into ranges and long divides. Hills that were mostly barren of vegetation excepting near the base where they were clothed with the verdure of the valley, but for the most part were sandy, brown, and bare. Almost to the top great ledges of gypsum rock, bare and of many hues, projected in many places as much as fifteen feet from the sides of a hill, and, above these, the small mound forming the

crest of the hill was sparsely covered with tufts of buffalo-grass. Here and there might be seen a small, red cedar, stunted and dwarfed and perhaps dead. In striking contrast to the barrenness of the hills lay the wide, sloping valley which stretched from their base, one beautiful expanse of green meadows alternating with the golden glow of the harvest-fields down to the banks of the M—— River, where they gave place to a goodly growth of forest-trees which fringed the banks on either side. Here and there in the distance might be seen a small, brown cottage, the home of some ranchman in the then newly settled country. Back from the valley and far in among the hills were deep canyons, narrow and precipitous, in the bottom of which lay great boulders of gypsum rock and where grew a wild and tangled mass of undergrowth, which was thickly infested with rattlesnakes and where the mountain-lion or cougar and wildcats were frequently encountered. Passing out of the canyons again and coming into the valley we find resting at the foot of the largest of these hills a little village of possibly two or three hundred inhabitants. The business part of the town consisted of one or two stores, a blacksmith-shop, a couple of hotels, and a post-office. In fact it was a typical western town where ranchmen come in at long intervals for provisions and the cowboys come at still longer intervals from the wide prairies for a good time and change from the

monotony, and likewise for supplies. No railroad had as yet found its way through the little city of S——, which very proudly bore the title of city even in this early day of its history, but a stage-coach supplied the deficiency and daily wound its way across the hills from a town some twenty-five miles distant to bring the mail and carry any passengers that might be traveling that way. On this particular afternoon of the day in which my story opens a traveler might have been seen walking slowly down the slope of one of the great hills and toiling along through the rocky canyon. Evidently he was footsore and very weary, and as the afternoon was hot he paused frequently to get a refreshing drink from the cool mountain stream that wound like a narrow thread down the canyon, widening as it entered the valley and forming one of the many tributaries of the M—— River. At last he emerged from the dark canyon, and the beautiful valley, above described, lay stretched before him and the city of S—— not far in the distance. Here the lad, for our traveler was but a boy, heaved a sigh of relief and sank down upon a grassy hillock under a shade-tree to rest, and while he rests for a brief while we will take this opportunity to describe him.

A rather slenderly-built lad of perhaps about fourteen years of age with light-brown hair and fair complexion which exposure to the sun had well besprinkled with freckles. The eyes were of

a blue-gray and features were very fine. Altogether the face had a rather bright, intelligent look, but it contained lines that marked the fact of evil habits already formed and bore evidence of coarse associations. He was evidently a boy that had had to care for himself and who had grown accustomed to the hardships of western frontier life, for his manner was far from having that refinement about it that characterizes the child raised amid the right kind of associates and under proper care and instruction, yet in spite of all this there was something about the face of the boy that was interesting, something attractive there, that made one feel that in spite of the rough exterior good lay beneath. The clothes he had on were coarse and well-worn and the straw hat, now thrown at his feet upon the grass, had a ragged brim. Lying stretched out upon the grass 'neath the tree's welcome shade he looked for a few moments upon the surrounding landscape until in the warmth of the afternoon and the quiet repose of everything around his eyelids began to droop, the long, light lashes brushed the sunburned cheeks and he slept peacefully and profoundly.

All was bustle and stir in the hotel at S——. The stage had just arrived, which was the great event of the day, and in the kitchen all was haste in the preparation of the evening meal. Several passengers had arrived and were either resting in the one plain little parlor or strolling about outside,

and a number of loungers were waiting around for the distribution of the mail, while the driver was exchanging his tired team for a fresh one for his return trip across the hills.

"Upon my life," ejaculated Jane, the chief girl in the kitchen, to her assistant as she whisked a pan of brown, crisp cornbread from the oven and began cutting it into generous squares, "but who do you suppose I found at the back door just now?" and before her companion had time to answer continued in the same breath, "a boy tramp! he looks half famished, too, and asked if I would give him something to eat."

"Well, what of it," replied the girl; "did you give him something?"

"No, but I will just as soon as I get through with the hurry of dinner," replied Jane as she piled the squares of brown bread upon the heavy earthen plate and handed it to her companion to carry to the dinner-table, "but a mighty small pattern he is to be sure to tramp around and beg for his bread."

A few moments later kind-hearted Jane appeared at the back door with a plate in her hand, generously filled with good, substantial food, a most welcome sight to the hungry boy (who was no other than the traveler we left resting on the hillside an hour or more ago), who sat down upon the step and ate with a hearty relish.

This done he set himself to work doing various little tasks about the yard that he saw were in

JOE AND JANE.

need of being done, carried in the fuel for the night, split kindling, carried away slop, and brought a bucket of fresh water from the well and altogether made himself so useful that Jane declared he had well earned his supper twice over and he was provided with a comfortable place to sleep for the night.

In the morning he made himself quite as useful, helping Jane about the kitchen, and to the questions asked him as to who he was and where he came from, answered only that his name was Joe, and that he came from in among the hills. When pressed still closer he finally said that his mother was dead and that his father was a drunkard, and that he often beat him, and that he had run away from him for fear he would kill him. Farther than this he would not disclose anything, but as he seemed a good, quiet boy, and was not afraid of work, he was allowed to stay around, and the little odd jobs and disagreeable tasks that every one else shirked, fell to his lot to do. In fact, no one really paid very much attention to him, excepting at first a few of the more curious, who asked some idle questions, only Jane, who pitied the boy and felt sorry for him in his homeless and friendless condition, and even she was too busy most of the time to bestow much thought upon him; but in spite of these facts his kindly smile and helpful ways soon won for him the confidence of those around him. In a few days they ceased to try to find out any-

thing more about his past life and as to who he was, and the most of them felt little interest in regard to the matter anyway. It was apparent to all from his speech and manners that he had lived among a rough class of people, wherever he came from, and that he had learned to take care of himself and push his own way through; but withal he was kind-hearted and had good qualities. So some weeks went by and he still remained, and having won the confidence and good will of Jane, he got along very nicely.

One Saturday evening as Jane was washing the dishes, and Joe, who had proffered his help, was wiping them for her, the proprietor of the hotel came in and handed Jane her month's wages. Not a great sum, to be sure, but how large it looked to the boy who had scarcely seen as much in his whole life.

"What do you do with it all, Jane?" he asked as he eyed the money with an eager look.

"What am I doing with it? Well, I have plenty of places to use it, but I have taken a claim not very far from here, and I have to save all I can to make improvements on it. I don't know of a better use I can put it to, and people tell me that by and by it will be worth lots of money." And Jane went on with a glowing account of how many acres of land it contained, of the good water and of the fertile soil, as she slipped the money into her pocket and proceeded with her task.

"You see," she continued, "I save out a little every month and put it away in my room up-stairs, until now with this month's pay I shall have quite a little sum put by," and Jane named an amount, which, though small, seemed very great to Joe. The rest of Jane's chatter was lost upon Joe, for he could only think of that sum of money Jane had saved and hid away. How large it seemed! Why, if he only had five dollars he would think himself rich. Five dollars would buy him the thing he most coveted, and which he thought he must of necessity have before he could ever make himself a hero in the eyes of the world. We have but to wait a little while before we learn what that was.

A half hour later Joe passed through the hall up-stairs and by Jane's half-open door, and glancing in saw her putting the money in a worn purse and secrete it behind some shelves. She glanced up as he passed and smiled. "Haven't I found a good place to hide it?" she said. "No one will ever think of hunting for it there, will they?"

"No, I don't think so," said Joe, as he passed on. A great temptation had been placed in his way.

CHAPTER II

FOR a moment after Joe had passed the door, Jane felt a trifle uneasy because he had seen where she had placed the money and she felt half inclined to put it somewhere else. No one heretofore had known where it was, but after a little

thought, she said to herself, "No, he is but a boy and he has been so good I feel sure he is honest," and thought no more about it.

A few days later when Jane came down to get breakfast she found no fire in the kitchen stove. "Joe must have overslept," she thought to herself, for since he had been there she had been relieved of this task and always when she came down in the morning found a good fire burning and the hearth swept clean of ashes. She shook the grate and took up the ashes and then went out to the wood-house for fuel. A good-sized pile of kindling was split ready for use and plenty of wood was near at hand which Joe had split and placed there himself, some of which she gathered up hastily and returning to the house built her fire and began breakfast.

She missed him in more ways than one during the preparation of that meal, and when it was over and the busy work of the morning was through with and still he did not come, she went in search of him. He could be found nowhere and the search revealed the fact that he had not slept in his bed that night. It was then that Jane remembered that she had not seen him since rather early in the evening previous, but as his evening work was all done up as usual she had thought nothing of it, especially as he often went out in the evenings anyway. A suspicion now crossed her mind and quickly ascending the stairs she went to her own room and reached behind the shelves. Yes,

the old purse was there and she drew it out. Her suspicion was not true then. She opened it and looked inside. The money was there. She felt relieved to think that her suspicions of the boy were not true and glad that her hard-earned money was still in her own hands. But no—she looked again. It was not all there and she counted it over carefully. Five dollars was gone. Could she be mistaken? Again and again she counted it over carefully. "Surely," she thought, "if he had taken any he would have taken all." But it was certainly gone, and after giving her room a thorough search she went down-stairs to tell the others and ask what to do. Five dollars meant a great deal to her as it does to every hard-working man or woman, and just at that time she felt that she could ill afford to lose it when money had to be spent upon her claim if she wished to hold it. What should she do? "Go up to the police officers and have a warrant issued for his arrest," said the proprietor "and they will hunt him up and bring him to justice and most likely, if you do it at once, they will find him before he spends the money and you will get it back." Jane hesitated only a moment and then went as he suggested. Before the police officers she told her story and the warrant for his arrest was issued. The constable was away, but a young man standing outside and accosted as Jim by the officer was hastily deputized and sent in search of the boy, so that half an

hour later, after obtaining all the information he could concerning the boy, and suggestions and guesses of various ones as to the direction he had taken, found the young man in his light rig behind his spirited little team climbing the long slope to the ridge-road, and while the constable is on his search let us go back and follow the fortunes of little Joe.

Trouble began that evening when he saw Jane put her money away and the temptation had grown bigger every day. Poor Joe, he had much to contend with! His childhood days had been anything but happy ones and the surroundings of his home and the associations with which he had been thrown had been far from elevating and it was no wonder that the ideals he had formed in early childhood were of a very low standard. As he had said, his father was a drunkard and more than that a gambler and a brutal man, and as for Joe's mother—she had died when he was but a few years old. He could not remember much about her. He only knew that he had loved her more than anybody he had ever seen since and that since she had gone his heart had ached many times for just one word or look from her who had been the only one who had ever manifested any love for him. As his father's associations were among the lowest and roughest, accordingly this class was the only one with which the son was brought in contact and as the only reading-matter that fell into

his hands was of the cheap variety his ideas were formed in accordance. Among these men he often sat and listened in wonder and even admiration to their stories as they told of their adventures. Sometimes the account would be of holding up some stage-coach and of bold robbery, or perhaps of some treacherous plot cunningly carried out, or maybe a daring defense and escape from the justice of the law. To Joe, men who could do such things as these were the bravest of men; he thought they were certainly great heroes. And it is not surprising that he should think this way since he had received so little training to the contrary. He has yet to learn the meaning of true courage. The boldest and most daring among them was the hero to him and as is the case always with ambitious youth he desired to emulate their example and show himself to be courageous and brave, in like manner.

And now, my little readers, lest you think I place too small a value on courage let me say that there is not a more beautiful or a more desirable quality of the mind than that of true courage. Each one should strive to cultivate it within himself, but he must first learn to distinguish between the true and the false. We call men courageous who face great dangers, but there are some things that require more courage to meet than it does to face a cannon's mouth. It takes more of real courage to do right sometimes than it does to confront

danger. It required courage on the part of Daniel when he refused to eat the king's food and drink his wine because it was against God's law and no one there but Daniel and the two Hebrews were trying to serve him. Rather than do wrong he had the courage to face the lions in the den. It took courage to enable Paul to travel from place to place in those perilous times and preach the gospel, defending what he believed and knew to be right in the face of so much opposition. It took courage for Christ to stand meekly and patiently and with a prayer of forgiveness on his lips while the angry multitude spat upon him and smote him and spoke of him in greatest derision. It requires greater courage to keep from fighting and be called a coward than it does to accept the challenge. It requires courage to keep from doing wrong when others laugh at us because we will not. Men will take a drink of wine or whisky when asked sometimes because they fear they will be laughed at if they refuse and keep on doing so until they have formed the habit and can not let it alone simply for the reason that they had not the courage to endure derision. But to return to our story.

Home-life to little Joe had always been unpleasant, but as he grew older it began to be almost unbearable, and each day his father grew more unkind, so that at last he resolved to leave and go away among the hills and seek in the great wide

world and find his fortune. So, one morning, when his father had left home for a couple of days, he started out, now following the ridges, now traversing the deep canyons, sleeping sometimes in a miner's cabin and sometimes in the open air when he found a place that he thought was not liable to be found by some wild animal. Sometimes he was without food, excepting the berries that grew wild on his way, until at last on the day on which our story opens he came out in view of S—— City, where that same evening he had found a welcome and been kindly treated and fed. As robbery formed as essential part of his idea of a hero, he did not deem that taking money that did not belong to him was a very bad thing to do. Money he must have to purchase a pistol or some weapon in order that he could begin his career. And the first opportunity that presented itself was Jane's money. After all, there was something in the boy's nature that told him it was not right to take it, but he wanted it so badly, and perhaps if he only took a little Jane wouldn't miss it of all that pile. Had it been a man who had plenty of money he would not have hesitated, but a poor girl who really needed it, it certainly did seem too bad. However, the temptation was too strong. He had sufficient honor not to take it all, but he would take only what was necessary to buy him what he so much coveted, and having once obtained this article, he doubted not in the least but that he

would soon have plenty. Five dollars would do, he thought, and he could take that much and perhaps she would not miss it for a long time and then he would be far out of her reach, and an opportunity presenting itself one evening he took that amount and left the hotel where he had been befriended.

Leaving the city of S——, he started off among the hills, and after two or three hours walk at a rather rapid pace for a boy his size he came to a little village or rather nothing more than a country store and two or three dwelling-houses. Here he stopped and purchased a cheap pistol, a liberal amount of ammunition and also a few crackers and a sandwich, the latter of which he disposed of as he sat resting on the doorstep. After his lunch and a short rest he again started on his way, being determined to go as far as he could that evening ere his absence at S—— should be discovered. Soon after leaving this place he entered into a new region where the formation of the rocks was very peculiar. Here and there great holes, entrances to subterranean caves, peered out from the edges of rocks or from the sides of a grassy mound in which the unwary traveler might fall. Some of these places seemed at first to be merely holes or wells descending straight into the ground, but were in reality the entrances to caves, some of which extended for miles and of which no traveler had ever found the limit. Joe had heard of this region,

indeed it was known of by many of the settlers, and as he walked along he glanced curiously at the different places.

The sun was almost setting and he glanced uneasily around, for the place looked weird and desolate and gave him an uncomfortable feeling, and it did not detract any from this feeling when suddenly as he was walking by but a few feet from the entrance of one of these caves he saw a strange and what appeared to him at first to be an uncanny figure, emerge from the opening. Joe's first inclination was to take to his heels and run. All his heroism died out and he had forgotten all about his pistol which was loaded in his pocket, but he stood stone-still for a moment gazing fixedly until the figure came out into the light.

The figure was that of an old man bent with the weight of many years. The long, flowing beard was white as snow as likewise the hair which covered his head. His clothes looked old and worn but he looked neat and clean withal and in his white, wrinkled hand he grasped firmly a strong staff. He too looked somewhat startled when he paused and saw Joe standing near, but as the boy's fear was so apparent he recovered himself quickly and spoke in a gentle, reassuring voice.

"Good evening, my son, be not afraid. I would not intentionally harm the smallest thing and least of all a lad like you. But what can have led you hither and where is your home?"

Somewhat reassured, Joe found his voice and answered, "I am seeking my fortune and have started out to be a hero and to make my own way in the world."

"Um," said the old man regarding him with a grave look, "a pretty young lad to start out like this, but you did not answer me at all; where is your home?"

"I have none."

"Have you no mother?"

"No, my mother is dead."

"And your father?"

"He drank and swore at me and I was afraid of him so I ran away from him, and oh, sir, if he comes this way looking for me, don't tell him that you have seen me."

"My lad," said the old man shaking his head solemnly, "if your story is true, yours is indeed a sad case, but I fear that you have done wrong in running away from your father. Perhaps there has been fault on your part and if you had stayed at home and been a dutiful son to him he would have treated you better. Had you not better consider this matter over again and return to him?"

"Oh, no sir, I know he would kill me. He was mean to my mother and she was good, although I can't remember very much about her, it has been so long ago since she died and I was so little then," and Joe sat wearily down on a mound near by, the tears starting to his eyes, for he was tired and the

thoughts of his mother had made a homesick feeling come over him and he suddenly felt the loneliness of a wanderer's life. "Please sir, you will not tell him if he comes?"

"Poor boy," said the old man, "don't be afraid, I shall not tell him that you were here, but where are you going to stay to-night?"

"I don't know," said the boy dejectedly.

"Then come in and share with me to-night in my humble cave. It is not often I am called upon to act the part of a host, but you are welcome to the best I have. Perhaps I can be of service to you in more ways than one. I am but an old hermit who has lived in this cave for many years and will not harm you. You can stay with me to-night and in the morning if you feel rested you can continue on your journey."

Feeling no longer afraid but completely reassured by the old man's kindness and his gentle voice of welcome, Joe accepted his invitation and followed the old man into his cave.

CHAPTER III

THE steps descending into the cave seemed to be naturally formed of stone, and were very steep, but the descent was not more than eight or nine feet. Coming from the twilight outside, it was some moments before Joe's eyes became accustomed to the dim light afforded by a small tallow-candle, and could observe the interior of the home

of this strange old man, who had absented himself from the rest of the busy world, and chosen to lead the life of a lonely hermit in preference to associating with those of his kind. The cave was unlike most of the others of that region, being very small and containing but one room, which in reality seemed to be only a hollow in a big rock. The floor was of solid stone, worn smooth, and the sides or walls, and ceiling, were bare, rough, and uneven. At the opposite end of the room from the entrance a place large enough for a fireplace was hollowed out of the wall. On one side of the room a ledge of rock projected about four or five feet from the floor and about a foot wide, forming a convenient shelf, which was well filled with ancient looking volumes, worn with much use and stained with time. Joe glanced curiously at these, vaguely wondering at their contents, and as to what the old man could find between the lids of those musty looking books that could be attractive. Then his eye wandered to the bunk at the other side of the room, the old man's sleeping-place, and then to a small table in the corner, upon which lay scattered a few writing-materials, which the hermit was gathering up and placing in a recess in the wall. A chair or two completed the simple furnishings of the cave, which was after all very homelike and comfortable, and after the heat of the day experienced by our traveler, was particularly cool and inviting, and altogether restful.

Feeling strange and unreal, and perhaps somewhat like people are supposed to feel who are the subjects of fairy stories when unexpected adventures happen to them, Joe took a chair proffered by the old man and sat down near the doorway, resting while he watched the old man set upon the table some cups and saucers, a couple of plates, and prepare some good, plain, substantial food for the evening meal, which light task done, he invited him to bring his chair and partake of what he had set forth. Joe brought his chair, and the old man, when they were seated, bowed his head and offered a few words of thanks to the Giver of all good for the food and for his protection and care afforded. The meal was a silent one, for Joe was hungry, and devoted his time and attention to disposing of a goodly share of the viands set before him, while the old man was thoughtful, seeming to take a quiet pleasure in watching his guest relish the food. The meal finished, he pushed the table back into the corner, and after washing up the few dishes and placing them away he drew his chair near to Joe's and sought to induce him to tell him something more of his past life and of his future intentions. He told him stories of his own life, things that had happened many years ago, and told them in such an interesting way that he soon had Joe talking freely and frankly to him, telling him of his life in the past, and of his hopes, ambitions, and desires for the future, omitting, how-

ever, all reference to S—— City, and of his recent experiences there. The old man listened keenly and closely, and when he had finished he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder and spoke to him earnestly and tenderly.

"My son, you are very young. You have been unfortunate in many ways, in that you have had no mother to guide you, and that the one left, to whose care you were intrusted, has proven unfit for such a trust. You have much to learn, and since you have no teacher you will perhaps be compelled to learn it by experience and many a hard knock. Do not be angry with me if I seem to reprove you, for you have started out in the wrong way, and I do this that I might, if possible, save you from some experiences that might cause you bitter regrets. Be honest, straightforward, and upright. Speak the truth and take only that which you gain by honest labor. Daring is not always bravery. Your imagination of a hero is leading you astray. Honest toil and labor bring greater rewards than that which seems more brilliant, and which is applauded by the unwise. Remember the words of an old man, who has lived many years, and has learned a little of the ways of life. You will not find in the life you have chosen to lead the satisfaction that you expect to find. There is a better way; choose that way now. Do right, and shun not those who may seek to help you in your endeavors to grow up good and noble,

but shun an evil and evil ways in whatever way they may be presented. Give up your ideas of roving and choose an occupation by which you may earn an honest living, and in which, in time, you will be honored as being one worthy of esteem and an example to others. You may not believe these words of mine now, but by and by, when you are a man, whichever way you have chosen you will then realize that my words are true, and if you have taken my advice you will be thankful for it."

Joe listened and felt the weight of the words of the old man. He was not used to having any one talk to him in this kind of a way, and to have such an interest taken in his welfare. Kicks and cuffs had fallen principally to his share, and these kindly words of advice and wisdom did not fail to impress him in a way which he would never entirely forget. Much more he said to him, then seeing that Joe was getting sleepy and looked quite weary, he made preparations for retiring. Having arranged his own sleeping-place and one for Joe, he drew his chair up to the table, and reaching from the shelf a well-worn volume and bidding Joe sit near, he turned its pages and read in low, even tones:

"My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

"For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind

them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.

"So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

"Be not wise in thy own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil.

. . . . . .

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his corrections:

"For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

"For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

"She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

"Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor.

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

"She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

"By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

"My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion:

"So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

"Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

"When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet.

. . . . . .

"Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

"For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous.

"The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

"Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

"The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools."

A sense of peace, mingled with remorse, stole over Joe while he listened to the old man's quiet tones as he read from the sacred pages. To-night, under such influences, the better path seemed easy to choose. At its close he laid the book again

upon the table, and, kneeling down, offered up a simple, earnest prayer for protection and guidance; then bidding Joe retire to rest, he finished his preparations for the evening. Joe was not long in accepting his invitation, and in spite of the strangeness of the surroundings he was soon wrapped in sound slumber, from which he did not waken until the morning sun, shining through a crevice in the rock, made a bright spot on the wall just above his bed.

At first he could not make out where he was, and he sat up in bed and looked around for a moment before the occurrences of the preceding day and evening rushed back to his mind, and by the fact that the sun was already well upon his daily journey, he realized that he had overslept, and that he should long ago have been on his way if he wished to make his escape. The old man had already risen, and Joe hastily dressed, and after eating his breakfast thanked the old man for his kindness to him and took his departure.

The morning sun was bright, and the day fair and pleasant, and Joe was so refreshed from his good night's rest that he walked briskly along.

The brightness of the day seemed to wear off the spell that had been over him; the old ambition came back, and he began to think that the old hermit was only a foolish old man and did not know much about what he was talking of. He loaded his pistol to shoot at the Indians or some

ferocious wild beast, but saw nothing more formidable than the harmless little prairie-dogs, which bounded out here and there but were gone again before his unskilled aim could do them harm. An hour or two later he fell in with a party of movers who were going in his direction.

CHAPTER IV

THE spirited little ponies, in obedience to Jim's command and touch, sped rapidly across the hills and over the long ridges that summer morning. The air from the high hills was cool and exhiliarating. The brilliant landscape, dressed in its summer verdure, was awake with the song of birds and the humming of insect life. It was one of those rare, beautiful summer days that come once in awhile, when Mother Nature makes her supreme effort to show us how beautiful the world can be.

He had but little difficulty in tracing the boy, since wherever Joe had stopped the day before they had not forgotten him, and pointed out to the constable the direction which he had taken; and not a great while passed until he came near the cave of the old hermit, where Joe had passed the night previous. The strangeness of the surroundings and the peculiarity of the old man aroused his curiosity and caused him to alight, and, while his ponies rested for awhile, to explore a little around some of the caves, and if possible, obtain from the

hermit some information of the whereabouts of the boy, whom he surmised from information he had received at different points along his way, could not have passed far from this place.

The old man eyed him keenly from under his white, shaggy eyebrows, and cunningly evaded the questions put to him by the young constable, remembering his promise to the boy that he would not betray his whereabouts to his father, should he come in search of him. He answered his questions briefly, and in turn questioned him closely as to the relatives of the boy, and as to who it was he was in search of, and for what reasons he desired to find him. The young man stated that he knew nothing of the relatives of the boy, and in fact but very little about him; that he had never seen him until he came to S—— a few weeks before; that he had committed an offense, and as an officer of the law he had come to arrest him and take him back, and not until the old man became fully satisfied with the truthfulness of his statements did he divulge what he knew concerning the boy. He then invited the officer into his cave to rest for awhile, and as the noonday heat was beginning to get oppressive, and his curiosity was not satisfied, he accepted the invitation, and in the cool retreat found a welcome change from the heat outside.

The old hermit was a pleasant talker, and not only that, but he was well informed upon many subjects, and Jim found the interior of the cave

with its queer formations, its simple furnishings, the shelves containing their many mysterious volumes of ancient book-lore, and last of all, its occupant, to be very interesting; so much so that before he knew or realized it, two or three hours had gone by, and he aroused to the sense of his duty, and that he no longer had time to tarry, and thanking the old man for his kindness he took his departure in the direction in which he said the boy had gone.

The sun was not more than two hours high when he neared the crest of a ridge, and a long, downward slope stretched before him. No sooner had he reached the crest than far down the slope he perceived a movers' wagon and a party of movers which had stopped by a clump of trees to rest, and he rightly guessed that his search was at an end. Touching his horse slightly he drove rapidly down the slope towards them. As he neared them he saw that they were watching his approach and that a youth was vainly endeavoring to load a musket in great haste. A moment more and he drew rein in their midst and sprang from his buggy with a stern command. The boy, who was Joe, at first seemed not inclined to obey, but when he caught the gleam of the star on his coat he laid down the musket, which he had borrowed from the movers, having broken his pistol. A man with a ragged, unkempt beard, sitting in the wagon, peered out from under the folds of the cover, one

or two other men standing near, and a woman and several children with tousled heads, looked on and watched the proceedings. The constable in a few words made known his errand. "I am quite certain that I have found the right one," he said, "and I want you to get right into the buggy and go with me, and it will be better for you if you make no trouble, but go quietly along." Joe was at first loud in his declarations that he was not the guilty party and that he would not go, but he soon saw that it was useless, and went with the constable as he had suggested, quietly.

That night Joe spent his first night in the jail, with the awful dread of the morrow and what the coming days might bring, and fearful that he might have to spend many nights there before he could again be free. He began to realize that he was getting some of the experience and some of the hard knocks that the old hermit had spoken of, and to think that perhaps after all the old man was right, and that he was not so foolish as he had thought him. It would be hard to tell all his thoughts that night, but he was overcome with the fear of the consequences of his act, and many times during those long hours he wept tears of sorrow for the lack of any one he could call his friend, for the loss of that mother whom now he needed more than ever, and from fear of the law. And it was a wan, pitiful little fellow that was presented in police court that next morning, to be tried for

theft. The trial was a brief one, for in a little while Joe gave in and plead guilty to the charge against him, and the judge was not long in giving his sentence. "The boy needs a lesson," he said, "and by the time he has spent thirty days in the county jail perhaps he will have learned it."

Thirty days in the county jail! Poor little Joe cried and begged not to be taken there, promising that he would never do such a thing again. But the judge was firm, saying that he feared if he let him go he would forget his promises, and he would give him something that would make him remember always, and ordered the constable to take him there that day.

But the heart of the young constable was touched. The boy's case was such a helpless one. His lack of friends and home, and his extreme youthfulness, caused his heart to thrill with pity, and he felt that the boy did not deserve such punishment; and a strong desire to help the boy took possession of him. The lad was not wholly bad, as he could see. If he could only have some one to teach him and help him to get right! He felt that he could not commit him to jail, as the judge had said, but resolved to take things in his own hands and free the boy. So before starting out that afternoon he went to the hotel, and taking Jane into his confidence, told her of what he intended to do for the boy.

"And now, Jane," he added, "put the boy up a

good, generous lunch and I will take him up the valley several miles and direct him which way to go, where I think he can soon find a home with some of the farmers, and plenty of work to do where he can earn an honest living. It is my opinion that the boy is made of the right sort of stuff, and this experience may be of real value to him, and I think that he is very sorry for what he has done and I don't wish him to have any more of this kind of experience. I know what company he will get into if he goes to jail, and it may only harden him and ruin him for ever. I will do what I can for him anyway, and give him the chance, and hope it will result in good to him."

Jane needed no further argument, but hastened to do his bidding, and in a few minutes returned and handed him such a generous lunch that he smiled in return. "Well, Jane, I don't know but this will make him tired to carry it," he said, looking at the large package, "but we'll give it to him anyway. He may need it all before he finds friends again, and I don't think you or I will ever regret our efforts in his behalf."

Jim stowed the lunch away in the buggy, hitched up his team, and half an hour later, with his charge, left the town in the direction of the county jail. Joe sat by his side, with a dull feeling in his heart, and a hopeless look on his small, pale face, which neither the summer day nor the singing birds, the balmy air, nor the fair landscape could chase away.

Once outside of the town the officer began to talk to him in a kind, friendly way, which he listened to in a listless manner and without making reply. After a long talk of good advice and counsel, much as the old hermit had given him on the night of his stay there, he finished by saying gently:

"Now, my boy, I am going to give you one more chance. At a risk on my part I am going to free you, if you promise me that you will try your very best to follow my advice. I am going to turn and go in this direction now, and take you up this valley several miles, and show you where you can go, and where, if you will try, I think you can find work, and possibly in time a home and friends, if you conduct yourself aright."

Oh, how welcome were these words to Joe, after his despair. What a relief to know that after all he would be free. He felt then that he never, never would do anything wrong again, and tears of joy and thankfulness filled his eyes as he tried to sob out his gratitude to the companion beside him.

"Oh, I'll try, indeed I will try so hard to do right, and sir, I shall never forget you and your kindness to me, and I'll try so hard to do as you say and as the old man in the cave told me to do. I didn't believe him much then, but I do now, and I'll never forget it. I'll try to be a good man, as good as you, though I don't believe I can," and as he looked up gratitude beamed through his tears.

"Thank you, my boy, but I hope you may be a better one," he replied.

Joe was now all attention, and during the remainder of the drive listened earnestly and thoughtfully to all his friend had to say, trying to remember all the good advice, and resolving with all his soul to do his best, that he might prove his gratitude to be sincere.

When they had driven for a long distance up the valley he told him he could take him no further, and showed him the direction to take. "Now, my boy, I have done all I can for you. Eight or nine miles up this valley you will find many good, prosperous farmers, and with some of them you will surely find a home. Here, Jane sent you this lunch, which will keep you from starving a short while at least, and you will write me and let me know how you have succeeded and what you find to do?"

"I will; if I find a place and get work I will let you know where I am and how I am getting along. And I am sure I can not thank you enough for your kindness to me."

"Well, never mind about that. All I ask of you in return is that you will be a good boy. Good-bye now, and don't forget your promise to write."

"Good-bye; I will surely remember;" and Joe was left free and alone while the constable drove homeward. Alone, but with a glad feeling in his heart and Jane's lunch in his hand, he trudged

along on his journey, the landscape fairly beaming with gladness and beauty. He was starting out again, but in a different way, and we hope that the resolutions he made that day were not all forgotten.

A few weeks later a letter was handed to Jim, the address being in an unfamiliar hand. He opened it to find it to be from Joe. The letter stated he had followed his directions and had reached a farmhouse the same evening that Jim had left him, that he had been taken in and kindly treated, and had obtained work, and was getting along nicely. He also gave the name of the family where he was staying and a description of the place. The letter contained expressions of gratitude, and also said that he was trying to do as he had told him, and hoped that sometime he would see him again. Jim answered the letter but did not receive an answer immediately, and as he went east soon after, that was the last he ever heard of Joe.

Farther than this we are unable to follow the fortunes of little Joe, but let us hope that the kind hand which watched over him in his first youthful perils, and put it into the hearts of some to help and encourage him; that the same hand has placed him among friends, and guided him through the years that followed and led him safely up to manhood; that the wise and kindly advice of the hermit and the young man, together with the timely aid of the latter, have not been forgotten.

So we leave him, trusting that in the care of the new friends he has found a home and a refuge, and that his life has become one of usefulness, an honor to himself and an example to others.

[Dear readers, when you lay down your book after reading this last chapter of Joe's story, won't you take time enough to offer a silent prayer to God that wherever Joe now is the Lord will watch over him and raise up friends for him? We ask this because Joe and his story are realities, and he is still in a world of temptation, if he has not died within the last few years. It is surely a blessed thought that you may ask God, who knows just where he is and all about him, to watch over him and raise up friends for him, who will help him to become an honest, honorable man. This story was told to "Pebble" by the deputy-constable who went after Joe, and who afterwards set him free; and we know you will be glad to learn that this young man recently united with our church. Did Joe find a good home? a home where God was reverenced and in which he would be taught virtue and truth? are questions which come home to the heart. Would to God that the homes of our land were all pure!]

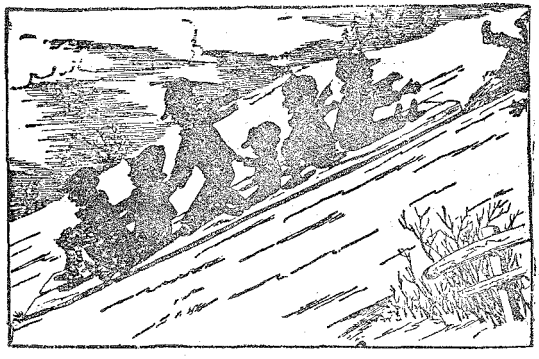
COASTING

"O MAMMA, may I go with the boys and Mary over on the big hill by Mr. Lee's to coast?" cried Maggie, running into the room where her mother was at work.

Mrs. Day was very busy that morning getting her sewing done for herself and little Maggie so that they could go on a visit the next morning to spend a few weeks with her friends in a town some miles away, so she did not notice all that the child said, and thinking that she only wanted to coast down the hill back of the house she replied, "Why, yes, I suppose so, if you will wrap up well and not stay very long." And Maggie, not waiting for anything further, but too delighted to get permission to go, soon had on her little cloak and hood and was trudging along with her brothers and sister toward the big hill nearly a mile distant from their home. She had been surprised that her mother had granted her permission so readily, but supposed that she understood where she was going.

On the way they passed Mr. Lee's home and Minnie and Howard Lee joined them, and the merry little party soon reached the hill and climbed to the top. It was a long one and a fine one for coasting, but some distance from the bottom was a ditch, and to keep from running

into this the one who guided the sled had to be very careful. The sled was a nice large one, large enough to hold all of the girls and one of the boys. The two older girls sat on the back part of the sled with Maggie on their laps and one of the boys sat in front to guide it, then one of the other boys gave it a push and away they flew. Down, down they went so fast it almost took their



COASTING.—NO. 1.

breath away, and almost before they knew it they were at the bottom and Rob had succeeded in guiding it safely to one side of the ditch. Then they climbed the long hill, piled onto the sled, and went flying down again.

Up and down, up and down they went with little dog Prince barking and trying to keep up with them, now Rob, now Will, now Howard taking turns guiding the sled.

"Here, Will, it's your time again," said one of the boys. Will got on, but this time either he wanted to have some fun in giving the girls a good tumble or else he could not manage the sled, for when they reached the bottom of the hill the sled pointed straight for the ditch, and in another moment they all landed in the ditch upon the ice. Fortunately none of them were hurt, but all crawled out laughing.

"Well, Will, if I couldn't guide a sled better than

COASTING.—NO. 2.

that I would quit," cried the girls. "We'll not let you guide us down again," and back they all went again.

How quickly the time goes by when one is having so much fun! Before they thought of such a thing as returning the morning was nearly gone and it had seemed such a little while, but to the anxious mamma at home the time seemed hours,

for she had learned from some of the others after they were out of sight where it was they had gone.

"I never dreamed of such a thing as their going away over there," she cried. "Why, Maggie is not used to being out in the cold so long and she is sure to take a terrible cold, and maybe make herself sick. I wish I had known where they were going." At last, just as papa was about to start out after them, they returned, and it was almost noon.

"Why didn't you tell me where you were going?" she said to little Maggie; "and what made you stay so long?"

"Why, mamma, I told you where we were going," she replied, "and I didn't know we were gone so very long. It didn't seem like we were there but just a little bit."

"Well, I guess I was so busy I didn't pay much attention to what you said, but I never thought of such a thing as your going away over there to coast."

"Why, mamma, I didn't get much cold, and then we stopped at Mr. Lee's and warmed, and oh, mamma, we had such a nice time."

Mamma got her warm and dosed her with medicine that night and she went to bed feeling as well as usual, but in the morning when she woke up there was a dull pain in her head, and her throat was sore, and it seemed as though she could hardly rise; but when mamma said that she was afraid they had better not go on their visit, but wait a

few days, she tried to act as though she were well.

"I guess I don't feel very badly, mamma, and I'll feel all right after awhile. Please let us go."

"I don't know about it. I am afraid you really feel worse than you are willing to own."

But after breakfast she did feel better, and then she was so afraid that her mamma would give up their visit that she would not complain any more, however badly she felt.

They went, after all, but I suspect that if she hadn't wanted so much to go, she would have been a pretty sick girl that morning.

BERTHA

BERTHA is a dear little tot with dark-brown hair and brown eyes that sparkle with mischief and fun, rosy lips and cheeks, and busy little fingers that are always hunting about for something to do. And now I want all the little ones to listen while I tell about her and her dollies. Such a lot of dollies! You would think there would be enough to satisfy two or three little girls. There's poor Jimmy, the rubber doll, and Sally, and Susie, with arms and feet broken off, and two or three more that no one has ever given names.

Little Bertha lives in the city, but last spring she went on a visit to her grandpa's and grand-

ma's, who live away out in the country. It was a new world to her, and how she did love to watch the pigs, and chickens, and calves, and would coax

ON GRANDPA'S FARM.

some one to carry her out to see them. Sometimes on dry, warm days her mamma would put her little blue sunbonnet on her and let her go out and play by herself, and then she would toddle all around the yard after the chickens till she was tired. Grandma has a big gray cat named Bob; but he wasn't used to little girls like her, and when she would try to catch him he would run; but he soon got so he was not afraid of her and would always

be glad to see her. Sometimes he would rub against her so hard that he would push her over, then she would cry; but they both loved each other and became good friends.

Mamma and baby stayed a month at grandpa's and then papa came after them and they bade good-bye to grandpapa and grandmamma and uncles and aunts and went back to the busy city. After they got home mamma got a gray cloth kitty and gave it to Bertha, and she called it Bob, and would play with it and carry it about the house as happy as could be. She plays out in the little front yard with her dolls and kitty and watches the people that pass.

A TRUE STORY OF ONE CHRISTMAS-TIDE

I AM going to tell my readers of how one little girl spent Christmas over fifty years ago. Rather a sad story you will say, when I have finished, but then, every one can not always have a good time; and if we never read about those who are lonely or unhappy we might grow selfish and forgetful. In the midst of the gladsomeness and cheer that surrounds us at the happy Christmas-tide, we might neglect to think and sympathize with others who may not be so fortunate as ourselves.

This little girl's parents were poor, and, though they did not really suffer for the necessities of life, it kept them constantly at work to provide good food and keep their little family of five housed and comfortably clothed. Thus far they had always been able to do this, for Mr. Day worked at his trade steadily in one of the large iron-foundries of the city, and Mrs. Day assisted by taking in a great deal of sewing. But they quite suddenly took a notion to leave their native land and find a new home in the far-off land of America. And so it was that a few months found them in the strange New World, with but little money, and but very few acquaintances. The youngest of the family, a sweet little baby of two years, had died on board the ship and the sorrowing parents had been compelled to see their darling buried in the blue waters of the great deep. It was in the middle of winter when they arrived, and Mr. Day at once set about hunting something to do, but, workmen being plenty in the foundries, he could find nothing to do but to work on the river cutting ice. Being obliged to earn something for the support of his family, he went to work at this, but the severity of this climate and the exposure to the cold soon made him ill, and in a few short weeks he died. Mrs. Day was now left alone to look after and support the remainder of her little flock under the most trying circumstances. She engaged all the plain sewing she could do, and

for the oldest, a boy of about twelve years, she found a place where he could continue work in the trade he had already partially learned. Though the income would be small for some time, still it would help a great deal towards their support. Even then she found it very difficult to get along; and finally she decided to hunt a place for Lizzie, the oldest one of the girls. Through the influence of a friend, a place was secured in the home of Mrs. Locke. Her duties were to amuse the baby and take care of her when Mrs. Locke was absent, to wash dishes, and dust, and to help in other ways in the lighter part of the housework, and, also, to help with the sewing. Although Lizzie was not yet eleven years old, she had been carefully taught in all these things. For her work she was to receive her board and the necessary plain clothing. So she at once entered upon her duties, and though she many times found them irksome, yet the baby kept her company and her mind occupied so that she did not miss her little sisters and the others at home quite so much. She took a quiet pleasure in all her duties, for she was not an idle girl, but was always busy; and she soon grew accustomed to the work and to the separation from the home folks. Then, too, it was not so far that she could not go home once or twice a week and see mother, and when she saw how much she was helping her by her work she was glad that she could do it.

So the months passed. Spring and summer went

by and Christmas-time was fast approaching. A few weeks before Christmas, Mrs. Locke received an invitation to a party or ball to be given on Christmas Eve at the home of some of her relatives in the city of Q——, some fifty miles distant. She at once began to make preparations to attend.

"Will you take Lizzie with us?" asked her husband one morning a few days before Christmas.

"Why, certainly I shall take her along to take care of the baby. I wouldn't get much enjoyment out of it if I didn't take her along, for the baby is so much better with her than with me," she added. "And, besides, I want to visit all I can while there and I am sure I couldn't get to it if I had to care for the baby all of the time."

But, occupied in her own happy thoughts, Mrs. Locke took no thought in regard to Lizzie's comfort or happiness, or, if she did, perhaps she thought that the ride and the sights in a new place ought to be quite enough to satisfy her little nursemaid. As for Lizzie, she wanted very much to spend the day at home with her mother and brother and sisters, and she rather dreaded to go away among so many strangers, but, as she could not choose, she decided to make the best of it; and perhaps after all she would have a good time and see a great deal and would enjoy herself more than she thought she would.

They were very busy during the intervening time getting ready, and on the morning of the

24th, the one-seated carriage was driven to the door. Lizzie was placed on a low seat in front and they all wrapped themselves in the warm, heavy lap-robes, for it was a cold day and the wind was raw and chilly. It was a long ride, and rather a dreary one. It was nearly the close of the short winter day when they arrived at the big house, which was already lighted and looked very bright and comfortable to the tired travelers. In spite of the warm wraps they had worn, they were quite chilled and it took them some time to feel comfortable again. Lizzie and the baby were taken up-stairs to the nursery where quite a number of other children were. After a while when he became sleepy she undressed him and rocked him to sleep and put him in the warm bed, then she and one of the other children went down the broad stairs to get a peep at the bright scene below and listen to the music. It was a very pretty sight to Lizzie, the large rooms decorated with evergreen and holly, and brightly lighted, and the numbers of gaily-dressed people; but the warmth of the rooms after the cold ride during the day made her very sleepy and she soon went back to the nursery and climbed into bed with the baby, and, with its little soft hand on her cheek, was soon sound asleep. She was so tired that she slept quite soundly, and somewhat later than usual. She was awakened the next morning by the sounds of merry laughter and delightful exclamations.

She peeped out from under the cover; some of the children were by the fireplace reaching for the things in their stockings, others were dancing around the room with their empty stockings in one hand and a funny dog or a daintily-dressed doll in the other, still others were just waking up and hopping out of bed eager to see what was in theirs, also. What a happy scene it was! Each had found some treasure in his stocking that he had long been wishing for, and none of them had been forgotten. None, except the lonely little nurse-maid in the bed in the corner, whom no one had thought of, and whose head was now hidden under the cover to hide the fast-gathering tears. She thought of the bright, happy days back in dear old England, of the dear father then alive, and of the happy Christmas Eves they had spent around the great fireside, and the pretty and useful presents father and mother had always managed to get for them. She could yet remember how mother's Christmas dinner tasted, and how they all enjoyed their presents—the dinner and the games after. But, oh! how far away it seemed now. Farther away even than old England itself. No wonder the little maid's eyes had turned away from the bright scene in which she had no part. But the noise was now waking the baby and there was no more time for thoughts like these, for she must hastily dress herself so she could get him ready for his breakfast. So, wiping her tears away, she turned her

attention to the baby and tried to keep her thoughts busy with him, but they would come back in spite of herself once in a while, and, before she knew it, the tears would be in her eyes again; but she fought them bravely back many times that day and tried to attend strictly to her duties. If she was very quiet and still, the others were too happy and too preoccupied with their presents and the good time they were having to take any notice, for which she was glad, and so the day at last wore away and the time came for their return home.

And now, although little Lizzie had happier Christmas days after that, which perhaps I might have told you about instead of this one, yet I have told you this one, not to make you feel sad, but that it may help some of us to be more thoughtful of those around us who are in a measure dependent on us for their happiness. It takes so little to make people happy sometimes. One of the bright picture-books and a handful of sweetmeats would have made Lizzie's heart very light that day, and there was such an abundance. Even a kind word, or one of commendation, will lighten the heart for days sometimes. Let us not forget at Christmas-tide to render all the little services of love we can, and imbue our hearts with the love of Christ that we may rightly celebrate his birthday.

BERTHA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

"WHY, next Sunday is your birthday, Bertha," said Mamma Way at the dinner-table one day.

"Oh, goody!" cried Bertha, "and, mamma, I'll be eight years old."

"My, what a big girl!" exclaimed Aunt Sadie.

"Big dirl," echoed two-year-old baby sister.

"Oh, mamma, can't I have a birthday party this year? You said last year maybe I could have one this year."

"But your birthday comes on Sunday this time, and we couldn't very well have a party on Sunday," said mamma, with a sly wink at Aunt Sadie.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Bertha, "and now I'll have to wait another whole year before I can have my party."

"Yes, but next year your birthday will come on Monday, and that will be a school day and you will be in school, and how can you make a party then?" said Aunt Sadie with an answering wink across the table to mamma which Bertha did not see.

"Well, something happens every time so I can't have a party. Last year when I wasn't going to school I was sick with the measles, this year my birthday happens on Sunday and I guess I never can have one," and Bertha left the table with a discouraged look on her face, unconscious of the

knowing smiles and glances that were exchanged between mamma and auntie.

The following afternoon, as Aunt Sadie was on her way up town, she stopped at the homes of several of Bertha's little friends and handed them a neatly printed note requesting them to come to Bertha's home Saturday afternoon and spend a couple of hours. They thought it useless, though, to try to keep it a secret from Bertha, and did not try to do so longer than Saturday morning, and Bertha was expectant and very happy to think that after all she was really going to have a party, and skipped about all morning helping wash the dishes, and doing lots of things to help, for, as mamma said, she was a big girl, now that she was eight years old, and could do lots of work.

About three o'clock in the afternoon the little folks began to arrive, one after another, until about twenty of her little friends were there, each with mysterious little packages which they shyly presented to Bertha as they entered, then after laying aside their hats they gathered out on the front porch and in the front yard. What a pretty picture they made, the little boys in their best suits, the little girls in their pretty, dainty dresses of pink and white and blue, with bright sashes and hair-ribbons.

"Now what shall we play?" said Bertha, when they were all seated around on the porch.

"Play fruit basket," said mamma.

"Oh, that's just the thing! It's the nicest game. You come and name us, Aunt Sadie."

So Aunt Sadie went around and named one of them peach, and one plum, and one strawberry, and so on until she had them each named some kind of fruit, almost exhausting her knowledge of names before she reached the end of the row. Then a lively time they had trying to get each other's places, and for some time the game went gayly on. But every game gets tiresome when you play it quite awhile, and by and by the question came again,

"What shall we play?"

"Drop the handkerchief," suggested Aunt Sadie.

"All right!" So they formed a ring and played drop the handkerchief, but this did not suit them very long.

"We don't like to play this, Aunt Sadie, can't you think of something else we can play?"

"Well, how would you like to play school?" she asked.

"Oh, that will be nice," cried a chorus of voices. "But who shall be our teacher?"

"Well, Mabel is the tallest and I believe she would make a pretty good teacher. Perhaps you had better choose her," said auntie, so Mabel was chosen, and succeeded in managing her pupils quite well. At half past four mamma came to the door and said,

"Now, Mabel, get your pupils all in line, and

while Aunt Sadie plays a march, you may march them all into the dining-room and around the dining-table."

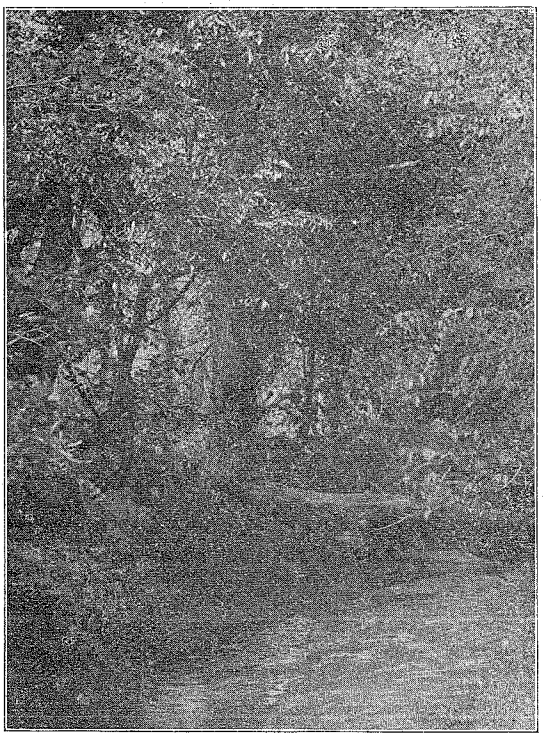
"Very well done, Mabel. You have your pupils pretty well drilled, and now you shall all have some ice-cream."

This part of the program you may be sure the children enjoyed very much and did full justice to the ample dishes set before them, and when they had finished it was time to go home, aud they gathered their hats and the merry party broke up, each one declaring they had a splendid time. And so Bertha had her party after all, and one she will long remember.

POLLY

POLLY was a little girl who lived away out in the country. There were large forest-trees on all sides. And soft moss, green grass, and wild flowers grew all around. And down at the foot of the hill a little brook babbled cheerily along. Altogether Polly thought it was a very beautiful place, for where she had lived before there were very few trees and of course no cool, shady places that seem to be just made for little girls' play-houses and swings. Now I am sorry to say that Polly was sometimes a lazy little girl. She was about eight years old; old enough to do a great many little

things about the house; but she was the youngest of a family of five, and the rest were all so much older than she and had petted and spoiled her



A LITTLE BROOK BABBLED CHEERILY ALONG.

until she had grown rather lazy. So sometimes when they were very busy and needed her, she was not as willing to help as she should have been.

I remember one day Polly's mamma and sisters were washing and were very, very busy. Papa had been promising Polly a long time that he would put up a swing for her out among the trees, and Polly coaxed him that morning to put it up right away. So at last he put it up and Polly was very happy. She swung all morning until mamma called her in to dinner; then she came in and ate dinner and was going to go right back to the swing again when mamma called her and told her she must wipe the dishes, for sister was tired and was not quite through with the washing yet. Polly came slowly back, wishing that dishes would wash themselves or that some good fairy would do it for her. She wiped the dishes but not with very good grace, and as soon as they were finished she hurried away to the swing before any one had time to give her anything else to do.

All the afternoon Polly sat idly swinging and when she did come in tired of it at last her head ached and she did not feel a bit good. She began to wish that she had not swung quite so much and that she had helped her mamma a little more. But if Polly hated to wash dishes, there was one thing she hated to do above everything else; and that was to turn the grindstone. To be called away from her play to turn the grindstone for half an hour or an hour seemed to her a dreadful task. "Oh dear!" she would say fretfully, "I do wish I didn't have to turn it, it takes so long."

"Now, Polly," said her brother one day as she stood impatiently turning the stone while he carefully shifted the scythe backwards and forwards across it, "you ought to be willing to turn awhile when the rest of us all have so much to do. As soon as I get this done I must mow the yard and you have all the rest of the day for play." Polly had never thought much about it before but now she saw how really selfish her conduct had been, and she felt very much ashamed to think how unwilling she was to help others. And she resolved to try to overcome her selfishness and learn to help others willingly and cheerfully. And she did try and, though she often failed, many times her lesson helped her to gain a victory over self.

"'CAUSE IT'S ME"

LITTLE ELSIE had been somewhat naughty one day. Mamma was talking to her that evening, and telling her how she should do, and why she should not be naughty.

"God loves little children," she said, "and he is pleased when they are good and mind their mammas, but he does not like to see them disobedient and naughty. It makes him feel very sorry when they are naughty and do bad things."

"But, mamma, he doesn't care if I do little

naughty things does he? I don't do very bad things, do I?"

"Sometimes you are pretty naughty and I am very sure he cares."

"But, mamma, he doesn't care just for me, does he? He might not like it when other little children are bad, but I should not think he'd mind when I do anything bad, 'cause it's me."

"Oh, but dear, he loves all his children alike, and is just as sorry when one is bad as another. You must not think that he loves you any more than all the other little children."

"Well, that's funny! I thought he wouldn't care if I did bad things." And she pondered the question over in her childish mind for a long time, why it is that God could not overlook the faults in herself. I wonder if there are not many of us much older than little Elsie who sometimes think that God will overlook little faults and misdeeds in ourselves " 'Cause it's me."

A MOTHER'S REWARD

"MOTHER, may we go with John and Frank Webb over to Mr. Dailey's? There are several boys going to be there and they are going to have a big time this afternoon," asked Luke Ward, as he and his younger brother, Willie, came running into the room where Mrs. Ward sat sewing.

Mrs. Ward looked up somewhat anxiously from her work to the eager faces of the boys. "Why, yes, I suppose so," she replied, "if my boys will remember what mother has so often told them about quarreling or getting into trouble of any kind. I know you have always been careful, but you know we are strangers in the town, and they say this is the roughest part of the town, and that some of the boys are very bad; but I believe I can trust my boys, and believe that they are brave enough to avoid doing anything wrong, even though some boys might call them cowards because they would not fight."

"Yes, mother, you can trust us. We will remember and be very careful," replied both, as they left the room and joined the other boys in the street.

The Wards had just moved into the small town of N——, and as it was located in the mining districts, there were, as Mrs. Ward had heard, a great many rough people there. She was a careful and considerate mother, always watchful against the evils that might seek to ensnare her children, and so far she had been well rewarded, for they had complete confidence in her judgment and thought that whatever mother said was all right, and disobedience to her wishes was not to be thought of.

"I do not see why it is," said Mrs. Dole one afternoon to Mrs. Ward, as she sat chatting to her in her little sitting-room, "that your boys

never get into trouble. I never hear of your boys even getting into a quarrel, and some of these town boys are dreadful hard to get along with. There are the Trump boys, for instance. I know my boy can not keep out of trouble with them, and I guess your boys are the only boys in town that can."

"I have always taught my children to never quarrel or fight, and never to get into trouble of any kind if they could possibly help it," replied Mrs. Ward, "and that if boys mistreated them it was not right to strike them back, but in every case to try to return good for evil."

"Yes, but Mrs. Ward, do you not teach your boys self-defense? Now my boy doesn't fight very often, and then he only does it to defend himself, and I believe in fighting for our rights. I don't want my boy to be run over by others, and I have told him so, and I want him to give them back as good as they send. Of course I teach him not to start a trouble, but when others begin it and then jump onto him I hope he will defend himself. What else could he do?"

"There may be cases when one might be justified in doing so, but I think that Christ in his great wisdom would not lay down a command for his children to obey and not provide a means for bringing them out of all difficulties connected with it. He might have different means of doing it, but as long as they obeyed him, he would never forsake them."

"Well, you may be right, but I don't believe that way. Now there are those impudent little darkies, the Lincoln children across the way; they are always pestering some one, and seem to take delight in seeing how much they can tease all the other children in the town, both white and black. I have seen them stand at the gate and throw rocks at the children as they passed."

"I guess they are bad children. I heard Luke say that they bothered them a little when we first came here, but they are good friends now, and I never hear of any trouble."

"Well, you are the first ones I have heard of that haven't had trouble with them; but my bread must be about ready to bake, so I must hurry home. Good afternoon, Mrs. Ward."

"Well," said Mrs. Ward to herself after she had gone, "I believe I am right; no harm can come from teaching my children to obey Christ's commands."

A few days after this she was standing in the door looking up the street. The Lincoln house was just a little way up the street and in plain sight of her own door. To-day the little yard in front of the Lincoln house was almost full of dusky little figures, for some cousins of theirs from another town were there visiting. Just at this moment Luke and Willie, who had been over in the village on some errand, came past. Immediately the little visitors, for they were not unlike their cousins, ran out with rocks ready for some fun.

"Hyar, Jim, Jake, don' you fro' dem rocks. Hol' on dar, I tell you," cried the others. "Dem dar boys am de Ward boys, an' we don' 'low no nigger nor no white boy nuther to fro' rocks at dem. Dem's de Ward boys, an' de best boys in dis town." The other boys dropped their rocks shamefacedly, and the boys came on home unmolested.

"He does indeed fulfill his promises," said Mrs. Ward softly, who had witnessed the whole scene, "and this is only one of his ways and means."

Years have passed by since the little incident above related. The children have grown to manhood. In a quiet country place far from the town of N——, as the sun was slowly sinking toward the western hills one autumn evening, might be seen a young man walking rapidly along the road, intent on some errand or some evening duty yet to perform ere finishing up his day's labor. He had not gone far when he was met by a man in a wagon. The man had evidently just been to town, for his looks bore evidence that he had been indulging in strong stimulants of some kind. Luke Ward, for it was he, accosted the man in the wagon with a "Good evening, Bob," for he was well acquainted with him and was about to pass on when the half-drunken man sprang out of the wagon, came up to him, slapped him on the shoulder, and knocking his hat off cried, "Come now, I am ready to fight! I want to have a fight with you. We might just as well have it out now as any time."

"Why, Bob, I do not want to fight with you. What should we want to fight for? I am sure I have nothing against you. Come, get back into your wagon and go on home."

"I tell you I want you to fight me now," he replied, pulling off his coat and throwing it down; "pull your coat and come on."

"Oh, no; I do not want to fight with you; that would do no good."

"Oh, you are afraid, are you? You are a coward."

"You can call me a coward if you wish, but I do not want to fight."

"Well, then, take a drink with me," producing a bottle from his pocket.

"No, I do not care for a drink either," he replied. It might be said that a few days before this Luke had some dealings with this man and there had been a little misunderstanding. He was a hard man to deal with, and a very rough character, and as he lived near it was impossible to keep out of dealing with him in a business way altogether. Previous to this time Luke had been fortunate enough to keep out of trouble with him, but he was the only one in the neighborhood who had. It was some time before he could pacify the man; but by careful, persuasive language and perfect self-control he finally succeeded in doing so and went on his way unmolested. This seems but a trifling incident; but a few months later this same

Bob Drew disagreed about some trifling thing with another man, who had not learned the use and wisdom of perfect self-control as Luke had. The dispute came to blows, and ere help could be summoned there was a sharp report, a fall, and the man was taken to his grave, and the unlucky Bob to a murderer's cell.

Think you not there was one mother who, as she laid her head on her pillow that night, raised her heart in thanksgiving to God for his protection to her son? who, had he dealt less gently, might have shared the same fate. This is not an imaginary tale; but only an incident of God's protection for his children. We may not understand how he will do it, but if we go faithfully forward he will find some way far better than ours, for God's ways are higher than man's ways, oh, as high as the heavens above the earth.

PAPA'S HOME-COMING

TESSIE'S papa had been away from home for a month or two and, oh, such a long time as it seemed to Tessie. Tessie's papa was such a kind papa and was so good to her that she always missed him very much when he was gone, and she was now counting the days till she thought he would be home. He had started out that fall in a big covered wagon to hunt him a home, for he was

tired of renting and wanted to get him a nice little farm somewhere in a new place where land was not so high as it was there, and one where he thought he could make his family comfortable. He had now been gone much longer than he thought he would be, but at last he had written that he had found one that suited him and would be home soon, and that he would bring something for his little girl when he came. So every day after they got the letter Tessie would take her little chair out on the front porch and watch to see if she could see any covered wagon which might be papa's and every day she would ask mamma if she thought papa would be home that day, and mamma told her that she thought he would come about Sunday, as it would take him about four or five days to come, and he had started Tuesday or Wednesday. And so Sunday afternoon she and mamma sat out on the porch all afternoon feeling that papa surely would come that day. But the sun sank lower and lower in the west, and still no white-covered wagon was in sight and finally Tessie's tired eyes could look no longer, and as the sun set and it began to get dark she laid her head in mamma's lap, and that was the last she knew until the next morning, when, with half-opened eyes, who should she see standing by the bed but papa. She was half awake no longer, but sprang so quickly into his arms that papa said she almost frightened him, for he thought she was sound

asleep. But I do not believe that she ever, ever will forget how glad she was to see him that morning. He had come only a little while after she had gone to bed that night.

Papa helped her dress, and then he gave her a pretty book full of stories and pictures, which pleased her better than anything else he could have brought her, and then they went into the kitchen to breakfast. On the table was a great dish of ripe red plums which papa had picked in the woods and brought with him. After breakfast he took her on his knee and told her of the new home that he had bought away out in the woods, and how the next fall she and the rest of them could go out and gather all the plums they wanted, and not only plums, but there were lots of nuts near the house, hickory-nuts, and walnuts, and hazelnuts, and that some of the great trees were very near the house, and that she could then have what she had so long wanted, a big swing, for he would get her a rope and make her a nice one in one of the nicest spots in the grove, until Tessie's eyes grew big and round with wonder and delight at the prospect. And you may be sure that when they moved Tessie did not forget to remind him of his promise, and many a happy hour did she pass away swinging to and fro in the cool leafy shade of the great trees.

WHAT THE BABY THINKS

WHAT a big world this is, and what big funny folks. They act so very funny that I wonder what they all mean. There are lots of them, too. There is a great big man they call my papa, and a pretty white lady they call my mamma, and a little black-eyed girl they call my big sister, and an auntie who stays here all the time, and a girl they call Anne, and then just lots and lots of other big folks come to see me.

If I stay awake, mamma rocks me and sings to me to put me to sleep, and if I do not go to sleep right away, then auntie comes and takes me and pats me and trots me awhile, and then if I do not, Anne comes and gets me and walks the floor with me and pats me some, too. And when I sleep awhile they shake me and pat me to wake me up, and if I cry they pat me and shake me and walk with me, and auntie gets a bottle and gives me something she calls medicine out of it, and which does not taste a bit good, and mamma takes me to the fire and gets me just as warm until I quit crying. And when I do not cry, papa tickles me under the chin and calls me a little rascal, and sister puts her lips against my cheek, and auntie tucks her head down and says "boo" at me, and then I have to laugh at all of them, and then

mamma just picks me up and shakes me again, 'cause she says I am so sweet when I laugh. So what am I to do? For they pat me and shake me if I stay awake, and they pat me and shake me to wake me up, and if I cry they pat me, and if I laugh they do the same. Well, well, what funny folks they are, indeed! So I guess I will just do as I please.

WHAT HAPPENED TO SNIPE

MY NAME is Snipe. I never was a very pretty kitten, and I am not as nice looking now as I used to be. My mistress used to say that she thought I was rather pretty, even if my coat was a dull gray and not so very clean looking, though I wash it and wash it as clean as it can be. My mother says it does not matter, so that I am a good kitten and I guess she is about right.

My sister Snip is pretty. Her coat is mostly a pretty clear gray and the rest is pure white. Every one thinks Snip is pretty and some of them like to play with her best on that account, but we never quarrel because of that. We have lots of fun playing together, and spend hours frisking about on the green grass by the side of the pretty white farmhouse, while our mother lies near by, watching that we do not get into mischief and

that nothing harms us, as only a good mother knows how.

We used to live a long way from here when Snip and I were a great deal smaller than we are now. The folks where we lived then said they did not like cats, so one day they put us all three into a sack, threw us into a rough wagon, and drove a long, long way with us. We got very tired and frightened, for the wagon jolted terribly and mother tried her best to get the sack open, but all to no avail.

At last the wagon stopped and the man untied the sack and let us all out at the side of the road and drove on. Oh, how glad we were to get out of the sack and have a chance to run around once more! We were hungry, too, and at once began to hunt around for something to eat. Mother found us a safe place and told us to stay there for a little while until she could go and see what she could do. Soon she came back and said,

"Children, we are not very far from a big red barn, and if there doesn't happen to be any cats there we shall probably be able to get all the mice we want for our dinner, then you can rest while I see where we are and whether it will be a nice place to live. Come, now, and we will go to the barn and see if we can find some mice."

We were quite willing to go, for we were beginning to feel very hungry, so we followed mother along the road, under the fence, and across a little

wooded pasture, and soon came in sight of the barn, and to our great satisfaction we soon had a mouse apiece, and when we had finished our dinner mother found us a nice little comfortable place to sleep where she thought we would be safe while she went around among the haystacks and cribs and to the house to see if there were any vicious dogs or cats that would be likely to harm us. After a thorough search she came back with the news to tell us that she was sure there was not a dog on the place, and did not think there were any cats, and that she believed we would all like very much to stay here. The folks seemed kind and gave her something to eat when she went to the house. She tried several times to get us to go to the house with her, but we were afraid. We started at last, however, but as we were going by the cribs we saw a man coming with a sack in his hands, and that frightened us so that we scampered under the crib in great haste. After all, he was only going to the crib to get some corn, but we were afraid he was going to put us into the sack and carry us off again. So then we all laid down under the crib and took another nap, for we were still tired from our day's travels and frights.

Well, mother went to the house every day and they gave her milk and nice things to eat. She tried many times to get us to go with her, but it was a long time before she could, for we were very much afraid these people would do like the ones

who carried us off, and we liked to stay here so well. Sometimes the girl who lived at the house would come down to the barn or crib, or wherever we happened to be, and try to coax us out from our shelter, but we would run as soon as we saw her. At last, however, we did go to the house with mother one day and they gave us some nice milk to drink, and after that we went again and again until we soon were not afraid at all, but stayed at the house most of the time.

As we grew bolder we used to play in the back porch in the sun or in the house near by that was used as a workshop. There were so many things in there for us to climb over and under and to play among, and among the old rubbish that was thrown in there we would sometimes find some mice. At one end of the shop was a big barrel, and Snip and I had often wondered what was in that barrel, but we had never yet been able to find out, for we either could not get up to it or the barrel was covered.

One warm Sunday afternoon Snip and I were playing around in the shop. Mother was gone somewhere and we finally got tired of playing and began to hunt around for something to do.

"Snip," said I, "I believe the cover is off the barrel to-day. Look! yes, it is leaning up against the wall, and now I am going to find out what is in that barrel. Mother says that people put meat and good things in barrels."

"Well," said Snip, "go ahead if you want to, but I don't believe I want to try it. How are you going to get up there?"

"I don't know yet, but I'll find some way."

And I did. I managed to scramble up by means of some boards standing near it that were leaning

"CAUGHT HOLD OF ME AND PULLED ME OUT."

against the wall, and soon I was up on the edge of the barrel, but alas! as I reached the top and climbed on the edge of the barrel I overbalanced

and tumbled in. I fell only a little way until I struck some thick, sticky, black stuff which partly bore me up, but in which I found I was rapidly sinking in spite of my efforts to keep on top. Oh, I was so frightened! I cried and screamed, and soon some one came out to see what was the matter, and my mistress, hearing the noise and hearing them call, came running out. She never stopped a minute, but reaching down, caught hold of me and pulled me out, and carried me out and laid me on the grass.

"Oh! you poor little kitten," she cried, "to think of your falling into the soft soap!"

So that was what that soft, sticky stuff was. I had never heard of such a thing as soft soap before, but it is dreadful stuff. It was in my eyes and mouth and ears and it made my tongue smart and burn. Well, they got a bucketful of water and washed me, but it stuck to my fur, and I was so frightened I would not hold still, for I could not see, and I didn't know what they were going to do with me. They used bucketful after bucketful of water trying to get it off, until I was so cold and frightened and shaking like a leaf, still they could not get it all off; but after getting as much off as they could, they took me and put me in the shop where it was warm and left me for a while.

I could not eat anything that night, and I stayed in the shop all night and passed a miserable night, and I heard my mistress say to her mother the

next morning that she could hardly sleep at all for thinking about me. Well, the next day I could not eat anything, and in the evening she said, "This will not do this way. Poor little Snipe will starve to death, and his mouth must feel very sore. I am going to see if I can feed him with a spoon." So she got an old spoon and some milk, and sitting down by me began to pour some of the milk into my mouth. After she once got me to taste it I let her feed me quite a good deal, for it tasted so good. The next morning she fed me again out of the spoon and quite often during the day, and from that on until I was able to lap milk from the dish again. It was nearly a week before my eyes got good and strong again and the soap was all off of me, and I got very tired of licking soft soap. And when it finally was all off, my coat was a rustier color than ever.

Well, I found out what was in that barrel, and I have been wondering ever since why it is that people keep such stuff as soft soap around in barrels. I am sure I can not see of what use it can be, and I am very sure it is not good to eat. Hereafter I think I shall not meddle any more.

AUNT MAY'S TALKS WITH HER BOYS AND GIRLS

CHAPTER I

IN ALL the world there was no one quite as good as Aunt May; so thought the little Browns and Druries. No one who understood them quite so well or who could sympathize with them so much in any of their troubles and no one quite so unfailing to help them out of their various little difficulties. If they were in difficulty of some kind, Aunt May seemed to know just what to do to help them out. If they had been hurt by the thoughtless words of some school friend, Aunt May seemed to know just what words to apply to heal the wound just as much as she knew how to bind up the hand or foot bruised or cut from a fall. She could make the best tarts and the nicest cookies of anybody. The girls always went to her to get their doll-clothes made and the boys for help to fix their kites, and no matter what plaything was out of fix or who was in trouble or what kind of trouble it was, Aunt May seemed to have the knack of straightening it out and making it all right. And so it was that through her kindly help and cheery ways she was very much loved by all of her seven romping, fun-loving nieces and nephews.

Aunt May lived alone in a pretty little cottage near her brother's and sister's home. It was a small

cottage, only five rooms, but each room was the most cozy and homelike it was possible to make it and ever seemed to be reflecting the cheer of their occupant. Aunt May herself was a sweet-faced, middle-aged lady of medium height, her eyes a dark-gray and her hair had once been very dark, but now showed many a silver thread. Her mouth with its dimple at the corner always wore a faint smile, and the face was always so smooth and placid as to almost make one believe that she had never known what a sorrow was. Not so, however, for Aunt May had known her share of sorrow, for she was a widow, and two bright, happy children had once been the light of her home, and her idols, but one by one the loved ones of her home circle had faded away and died, leaving her at last alone, and oh, so lonely. At first it seemed too much to bear but by and by she put it aside and took up her work alone, and the love of her nature she had so lavishly bestowed upon her own now flowed out to all children, and especially to these her brother's and sister's children. She loved to gather them in around her each Sunday afternoon and teach them of the love of God,—teach them in whom they might trust that they might ever have a safeguard, and she sought by every means to make her home pleasant and attractive that they might enjoy the quiet hour of the Sabbath afternoon with her, and that in that hour she might be able to early imprint lessons of the ways divine and by

prudence and carefulness to restrain this one's waywardness; to curb another's restlessness, and help them to early form correct habits. She had ever a welcome for them as well as for the most poor and humble child who came, for none could mistake the warmth of Aunt May's welcome. And so well did she succeed that no Sunday found any of them absent from her home unless it was unavoidable. Let us go in some Sunday afternoon and listen to Aunt May's talk to her children.

It is Sunday afternoon in early spring and, from the beech-tree which shades the west window of Aunt May's cheery sitting-room, the buds are just beginning to burst forth. The sun is shining brightly, warming the earth and driving away all thought of the chill of winter. The robins are caroling forth their songs of cheer, and the grass on the lawn is springing up, half hiding the low-lying brown blades of last year. In the house it is quiet save for the soft purring of Aunt May's tabby, which lies contentedly on the rug near the stove where just a little fire is burning, enough to keep off the chill of the early spring day, and the slight creak of Aunt May's rocker as she sits waiting for the flock of little ones. By and by in come the children, first the Browns, Philip the oldest, a quiet, manly boy of about twelve years and very much unlike his brother, two years younger, who is almost unable to sit still five consecutive minutes and is ever up to some lively boyish prank

which makes him almost the terror of his little sister Nelly and his baby brother Dick. Next are the Druries, with Amy the oldest, a sweet girl of ten or thereabouts, whose willing hands and thoughtful heart make her her mother's standby, and whose sweet, gentle ways make her a favorite with everybody; hoydenish Harry, her brother, two or three years younger, and who is at once the pet and torment of her life, and by the hand she leads little Dorothy Dot, whose timid little lispings and winsome ways win the heart at once.

So now I think I have introduced them all to you —these nieces and nephews of Aunt May's—and trust you will soon be well acquainted with them. She helps them take off their wraps in the hall, meanwhile they are all busy with their chattering tongues, relating to her the events of the past week or few days, as the case may be, since they have seen her last, and of the various little incidents that go to make up and give interest to childish thoughts. Then she leads them into the sitting-room, and as soon as the chattering ceases they begin their Sabbath lesson. How they do enjoy those lessons! Aunt May seems to always have something new to tell, some new thought or some new story from the Bible of such interest. Then too she can always tell it so that it is twice as interesting as when some one else tells it, and so familiar have they become with the pictures in her large illustrated Bible that even little Dorothy Dot

and five-year-old Dick can tell the story of each one in their lisping baby tones.

"Now, children," said Aunt May as she seated herself in front of the little semicircle, "I am going to talk about something a little different to-day than we have been, and I am sure you will all be very much interested. I have a little plan to unfold."

"Do tell us right away, we are so anxious to know," cried they all in chorus.

"Well," said Aunt May, smiling at the little, excited group, "how many of you like flowers?"

"Oh, I do," and "I do," and "I do," cried they all.

"Why, Aunt May, you know we all do," said one.

"Yes, I am sure you all do," she replied. "How many of you would rather see a flower growing than a weed?" The children looked at her in astonishment.

"Why, Aunt May," said Philip, "what a question! You know no one likes weeds, and I am sure every one likes flowers."

"Very well, then, and now as we all like flowers so well, I have in my mind a plan that we all start a flower garden this spring of our own, and see what nice flowers we can raise, and how well we can keep the weeds out of it."

"Capital!" "Lovely!" "Oh, how nice!" "I am ready!" were the responses.

"Well, I like flowers and think they are pretty and all that, but I don't like to pull weeds very

well," admitted Harry, slowly, which speech caused them all to laugh, for Harry was a little lazy, and especially when it came to working in the garden.

"So you don't like to pull weeds very well, Harry?" said Aunt May. "Then I am afraid your garden won't look very well, for it usually takes a good deal of work, especially if we want very nice flowers, and of course we don't want a half-tended garden containing a few sickly little flowers, but a garden of healthy, blooming, flourishing plants. Now, how many are ready to begin to-day?"

"Why, Aunt May, this is Sunday! how can we begin to make our gardens to-day, and where will we make them?" and they all laughed.

"Well, I will tell you," said she, "this garden is going to be a different garden, and we can begin to-day as well as any other day. The garden I speak of is the garden of our hearts, which we should always cultivate, and plant therein the seeds of the beautiful flowers of love, truth, and honesty, and unselfishness, and all the seeds of good and truth, and the weeds that we are going to have to contend with and pull up and keep out of the garden are the evil things that are constantly trying to climb into our hearts, such as selfishness, hate, envy, jealousy, and strife."

"Oh!" said the little group in one voice, and each began to look very serious and to wonder how Aunt May was going to begin, anyway.

CHAPTER II

"Now," said Aunt May, "I want to tell you about two gardens I saw one day last week when I was taking a ride out through the country. The first was so beautiful that I paused to look at it and enjoy its freshness and beauty and its fragrant sweetness. There were roses and pinks and carnations, pansies, scarlet and gold nasturtiums, purple and pink verbenas, in fact, large numbers of varieties of the nicest flowers, and not one weed dared to raise its head in all that array of blossoming sweetness. But in such contrast to this was the one on the other side of the road that I stopped a moment to compare. Here the flowers had once been healthy plants, but had been neglected so long that they had been so choked out by the tall weeds that only a few remained, and these were pale and sickly-looking, and one might wonder how they looked as well as they did when they looked at the mass of tangled weeds that were crowding them out. The one had been carefully tended and cultivated, the other had been so sadly neglected. Now we know that if we started out to raise a garden, we would want it like the first one, wouldn't we?"

"Oh, of course," was the reply. "But, Aunt May, we want to hear about that other garden you were going to tell us about, and all about what you meant by the garden of our hearts."

"Never mind, we'll be at that presently. I want

to tell you about something else I saw while I was out driving. I passed a schoolhouse. The children were out playing during the recess. One little fellow was joining in the game of blackman and seemed to be enjoying it to the utmost. He could run swifter than any one of them, but he tried to help some one through that could not run so fast, and so he was sometimes caught almost the first one. Some one fell down or got run over, and he was the first one there to pick them up and brush the dust from their clothes. The wind caught a little fellow's cap and carried it into the brier hedge, and he stopped long enough to rescue it and return it to its owner. I saw another boy playing in the game too. He swore at the boy who caught him and declared he wasn't caught fairly. He tripped two or three of them up while they were running, causing them to get a hard fall. He threw one little girl's pretty pink sunbonnet down into the dirt, where it was stepped on and mashed before she could get it, and then laughed because she cried. His face, young as he was, already showed lines of hardness and cruelty. Now what do you think I thought of when I saw those two boys? Do you wonder that I thought of the two flower-gardens I had just seen? How much like the well-tended garden did the heart of this first boy seem, and how much like the other one was this last one fast becoming! And if he continues in this way until he has grown to man-

hood, neglecting to pull out these weeds of vice and ugliness, what an unpleasant sight he will become. Instead of being pleasing in appearance as the other boy is who has allowed nothing to grow but that which is good and beautiful, he will be turned from in disgust."

Seven little faces became very serious as Aunt May talked. Fourteen round eyes were gazing up into her face as she finished.

"And now," said Aunt May again, "there are none of us that want to be like this bad boy, and all of us want to grow up to be good men and women; and, no doubt, there are none of us but what expect to be good when we are grown, but let me tell you that if we expect to be good when we are grown up to be men and women, now is the time for us to begin, for if we wait too long, the weeds may get too big and we can't uproot them, and so my plan is that we begin to-day to work and plant our seeds and cultivate our hearts so that we can now and always have a beautiful garden that people will admire and pause to look at. But I can tell you now, that unless you watch very closely, these seeds will spring up almost before we are aware of it, and they can grow even more rapidly than the weeds out in the garden. But you will be able to tell me about that yourself after you have tried it awhile. One thing, however, that when rightly tended and cultivated, no garden on earth is half so beautiful."

"Well, Aunt May, we are ready to begin if you will tell us how, but I am afraid that some of the weeds have a pretty good start already in my garden," said Philip, "and I fear I shall have some hard work to pull them up."

"Then if you have we'll try and see if we can get them up before they are any bigger," she answered.

"But how are we to begin, Aunt May?" asked Harry. "I am sure I don't understand yet."

"Nor I," answered Nelly.

"Well, we'll begin this way. We will take one flower at a time and study how to cultivate it and keep it growing nicely; for instance, I will give you the flower Kindness this week to think about and to learn all you can about, and cultivate it, and in order to do this we must try always to be kind and keep the little weeds of unkindness and selfishness from springing up. Next Sunday I shall expect each one of you to tell me how well you succeeded in this, and what you did in the way of kindness to others, and what you learned about it, and whether you let any little sprigs of it get choked out by the weeds of hate or selfishness during the week, and to keep a careful watch all day, and each day to keep all the weeds out. In addition to this I will leave it to Amy to hunt up some story from the Bible about kindness and tell it to us next Sunday at the beginning of our lesson; then after that each one will tell what he or she

has done or left undone in this respect. Now do we all understand? Yes, I think so," as the hands went up. "What is it, then, we are to do this week, Rob?"

"Be kind all the time," said Rob soberly, for Rob was beginning to think he was going to have a pretty hard time of it, and that this new feature would require him to refrain from playing a good many pranks which at another time he would not think much about; however, he thought to himself that maybe he could stand it to be real good for one week, and anyway he would try it just for Aunt May's sake.

"All right, now, don't forget. And little Dot and Dick will remember too, won't you, not to be unkind or cross this week? And Amy, be sure and have the story ready to tell us next Sunday. And now I think we have talked long enough for to-day. Rob can't sit still much longer, I see, and little Dot is getting hungry, as no doubt the boys are too, so we will make a raid on the kitchen and the cookie jar, and then I will walk part of the way home with you."

So ended Aunt May's talk.

CHAPTER III

It is Sunday afternoon and we will slip into Aunt May's again and hear what they all have to say. The children are all eager as usual, except that Rob's face is a little flushed and looks as

though his experiences might be anything but flattering to himself.

"Well, Amy," said Aunt May as soon as they were seated, "we are ready to hear your story now," and Amy begins:

"I will tell you the one that I think is the best example of kindness that I know of or could find. It was told as an example of brotherly love, but I think it applies very well here, also. There was once a Jew living in Jerusalem that started on a journey to the city of Jericho, some miles distant. Now the Jews in those days considered themselves very holy and thought many other people were very wicked and that there was no good in them because they were not Jews and that they were too wicked even for them to have anything to do with. I suppose this Jew thought a good deal the same way, but I do not know about that; anyway he started on his journey to this city, but before he reached it he was caught by some thieves who hurt him badly and took all of his money and his jewels and the most of his clothes and then left him by the roadside to die. The poor Jew was so badly hurt that he could not go on, and so he lay by the road hoping that some of his people might be passing and would help him. By and by he heard some one coming and he looked up to see who it was, and thought sure that now he would be helped, for it was a Jewish priest that was coming. But when the priest saw him he passed by on the other side

of the road and would not help him at all. Soon another of his countrymen came along, and though he paused a moment and asked him what was the matter, he did nothing whatever to help, and went on by. The poor man was now almost in despair, but again he heard some one coming. This time it was a man from an adjoining country called Samaria, a country and people that the Jews did not like, but this man didn't do like the rest of them had done. He stopped and found out what was the matter, then he bound up his wounds and put some of his own clothes on him, and put him on his own steed, and took him to an inn, and told them to take care of nim until he was well and he would pay them for their trouble."

"That was the Good Samaritan," said Philip. "We all know that story."

"Yes, I know, but I thought it was the best example of kindness, for he was very kind, and then, too, it was to a stranger and one who despised him.

"Yes, Amy, the story is a very good one and the application is all right. A better example of true kindness could hardly be found, as well as an illustration of brotherly love, yet there are thousands of ways in which one may do acts of kindness. And now I am anxious to learn some of the ways that my boys and girls have found this week. First we will hear from Philip."

"Well," said Philip, "I can't say that I have done

very much, and not as much as I ought to have done, Aunt May, but I tried to remember and to be as kind as I could, and if I had been still more careful I might have found a good many more ways and have done a great deal more than I did. I went over one evening after school to Mrs. McClean's and sawed her wood for her, for Mr. McClean had the rheumatism so bad that he couldn't; and then I carried some of it in for her, and as she had to carry water so far, I carried enough to last her all the next day. Another day I gave a poor blind man some money. At school I tried to be kind to everybody and be as near like the first boy you told me about in your lesson last Sunday that you had seen on the playground."

"Very good, Philip, a very good record, indeed. Now we will hear from Nelly."

"I gave a part of my dinner to a poor little girl at school one day who had nothing in her lunch but some dry bread, and I took some apples to poor Mrs. Rook, and I tried to always speak kindly to mamma and all, and take care of little brother."

"Next, we will hear from Rob."

Rob's face flushed more than ever and he dropped his eyes. "Well, Aunt, I don't like to tell you about mine, for I shall have to tell about weeds instead of flowers, for I didn't know that I had let the weeds grow so big and that I really was so mean as I am."

"Well, go ahead anyway, Rob, and perhaps it will cause some of the rest of us to think and to help you."

"Well, in the first place I got angry at George Gray and I thought I would play a trick on him by tripping him up with a string, so I stretched a string across the path where I knew he was sure to go, but before he came along good old Grandma Drew came along and tripped on it and nearly broke her arm. Then I teased little Dick so much that he cried. Then I harnessed Towser up to my little wagon one day, and because he didn't understand what I wanted of him I whipped him, and then I was so cross to mamma, and I guess I wasn't kind to anybody the whole week. It doesn't seem as if I was. Anyway, Aunt May, it's awful hard to be good," and Rob's face wore a very doleful expression as he finished.

"This is a pretty long list, and I am sorry to hear that my little Rob did all this, but still I am glad he had the manliness to tell us all about it," and she laid her hand tenderly on his head. "It is pretty hard to be good sometimes, and I expect that Rob has thought so much about his misdeeds this week that he has forgotten some of the kind things that he did, and if he would think a little bit he could think of something good he had done, for I can't believe that Rob would not do a kind thing for a whole week." Rob shook his head. "However," she continued, "it is bad enough, and

we must begin right at once and work hard so that we will have as few records like this as possible. We can not expect to pull up all the weeds in one week, and must just keep trying, and by and by we will succeed."

"But, Aunt May, I can't be good all the time, I want to have some fun part of the time," said Rob.

"Certainly you must have some fun, but that doesn't follow that you can not be good at the same time, if you choose the right kind of fun. We must learn to take pleasure in only such amusements as will be agreeable to every one else and will not hurt or harm in any way, and when we learn this we will soon dislike to do anything or cease to find amusement in anything which mars the pleasure of some one else or that will in any way cause us to be unkind to others. You don't want these weeds to become great big ones, do you, Rob?"

"Oh, no," he replied.

"Well, that they will surely do unless you begin at once to pull them up, for now is the time to begin. There is no time like the present, for now the weeds are comparatively small, but they will be great big ones before long and will be almost impossible to pull up if you don't go to work at once, and I am sure you will try."

Little Dorothy Dot was next and she told how she had rubbed mamma's head when she had the headache, and then Harry told how the first of the

week he forgot, but he tried hard to remember and got along better the latter part of the week, and so on until all had finished.

"Now," said Aunt May as they all finished, "altogether I think we have done very well this week, and if some of us haven't done as well as we might, let us keep at it and see if we can not do better. These flowers are worth striving for, and we must not be discouraged or disheartened by some failures at first, and we will have a nice garden by and by. I am reminded of a little verse of Alice Cary's that I want you to remember:

True worth is in being, not seeming,
In doing each day that goes by
Some little good, not in dreaming
Of great things to do by and by.
For whatever we do in our blindness,
And spite of the fancies of youth
There's nothing so kingly as kindness
And nothing so royal as truth.

Now, I will leave it to you as to whether we will go on with our gardens or whether we shall give it up and let the weeds grow."

"We will go on," they cried, "and we will try!" "We may not have very good success," said Amy, "but 'tis better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all."

"I am glad to hear you say that, and I felt sure you would be willing to try this again. So now for the next lesson I will give you the flower Self-denial, and I will leave it to Philip this time to hunt

up the lesson story for us, and want each one to remember that we have two flowers to cultivate this week, instead of one. Here is a verse, too, that I think will help you to remember. It is Christ's own words. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' Keep this in mind, and let us have as good a record as we can. Let us sing a verse of 'Scatter seeds of kindness.'" And heartily they all joined in singing,

Let us gather up the sunbeams
Lying all around our path,
Let us keep the wheat and roses,
Casting out the thorns and chaff,
Let us find our greatest comfort
In the blessings of to-day,
And with patient hand removing
All the briers from the way.

Then scatter seeds of kindness,
Then scatter seeds of kindness,
Then scatter seeds of kindness
For our reaping by and by.

CHAPTER IV

IT WAS Monday morning and Philip Brown went whistling along on his way to school. The morning was frosty and cool, but bright and sunshiny, and Philip stepped briskly along in the fresh morning air, for he had been detained this morning to help his mother a little later than usual, and necessarily had to hasten his footsteps in order to be at school in time. The rest of the children had gone

a half-hour before him. The mile walk was soon accomplished and he reached the village a few minutes before nine. As he was passing his father's blacksmith-shop, for his father was a blacksmith and every day walked down to the village early in the morning and returned late in the evening, his father called him.

"Philip, Mr. Dixon was passing here this morning and he told me to tell you that he would like to see you and for you to stop in his store the first opportunity you had for he wanted to talk with you."

"All right, father, did he tell you what he wanted?"

"No, he was in a hurry then and said he would see me later."

"Well," said Philip, "it is yet a quarter till nine and I will have time to stop in and see him yet this morning. I wonder what he can want of me." The next moment he stepped into Mr. Dixon's grocery on the corner.

"Good morning, Mr. Dixon. Father said you were wanting to speak to me."

"Yes, yes. I am glad you came in. Just step back this way; I want to talk with you. I'll not detain you long, as I see it will soon be school-time. Now, I'll tell you. I am in need of another hand in here this summer. The boy that I have is going to leave and I need a delivery boy. How would you like the place? I will give you a job during

vacation and longer if you want it, if you prove satisfactory to me, which I think you will. School will be out this week, and if you want to earn a little money this summer for yourself it will be a good chance for you."

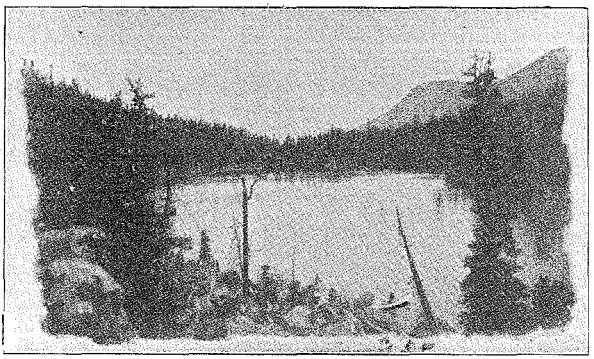
"I thank you very much, Mr. Dixon, for your consideration, but I have been intending to spend my vacation, or the early part of it at least, on a pleasure-trip with my cousin in the mountains. We have had it planned ever since last summer. Aunt and uncle are going and they said if I would go it would cost me nothing except my car-fare out to uncle's."

"Well, I am sorry on my account, but I suppose I ought to be glad on yours. I am sure you are to be envied for such a trip, as that is lots of pleasure as well as benefit in many ways; still, I wish it were so you could stay with me this summer. I would have given you three dollars a week at first, and more after you had had a little experience. I scarcely know who else to get that I can trust. I do not feel a bit afraid but what I could trust you and have perfect confidence in you. Of course you are pretty young, that is one disadvantage, but you are large of your age and have nice manners and are quick, and I think you would soon make as good a hand and a great deal better than some older ones."

"I am sorry, Mr. Dixon, to disappoint you, and appreciate your kindness, but I have been looking

forward to this trip for a long time, and should feel very much disappointed to give it up. Were it not for that I should, no doubt, be glad to accept your offer and earn some money for myself."

"Very well, Philip, I suppose I shall have to give you up, and I hope you will have a good time. When do you expect to start?"



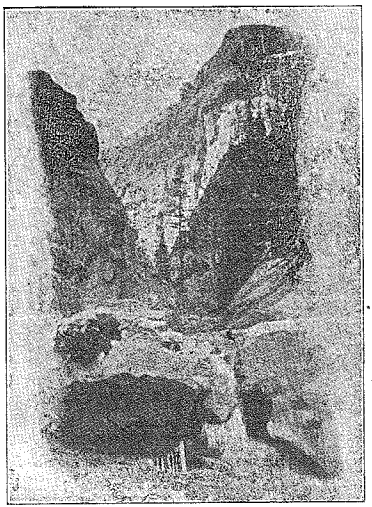
"IN IMAGINATION HE TOOK MANY A BOAT-RIDE ON SOME CLEAR MOUNTAIN LAKE."

"Right away. As soon as school is out. About next Monday, I expect."

"Oh, then you will be gone some time; or do you expect to stay all summer?"

"Most of the summer, anyway. I don't know just when I shall be back, but there goes the bell, so good morning, Mr. Dixon," and Philip started away on the run, reaching the schoolhouse just in time, where soon he was busy over examination-

papers filled with long lists of perplexing questions and vexing problems, and midst the thoughts of answers to these were mingled those of the vacation now so near, so that while he was vainly endeavoring to remember some date or solve some problem, almost before he knew it he would be wondering where he would be two weeks from now; or he wondered if three weeks from now he would be sitting under the shadow of the cedar-trees catching fish in some clear mountain lake, or climbing the mountains and collecting specimens, and wondering what trophies he would bring back as specimens of his marksmanship.



"SURROUNDED ON EVERY SIDE BY HUGE MOUNTAINS."

In imagination he took many a boat-ride on some lake, and when tired of the day's sport camped at night in some valley surrounded on every side by the huge mountains, and was lulled to sleep by the falling waters of some splashing mountain stream. It was hard to keep his mind on

his studies this last week of school. He and Rob, his cousin, who had visited him last summer, had planned it then while he was there, and all winter they had been writing about it and thinking of some new plan or way to enjoy themselves when the time should come, and now the time was so close that it seemed to Philip he could hardly wait the remaining few days. It was no wonder that he could scarcely keep his mind on the examination-papers long enough to give intelligible answers, and so busy was he during the rest of the day that he almost forgot about Mr. Dixon's offer until the last lesson was done and he was on his road home. After reaching home he went about his usual evening chores, getting the wood and kindling for night, milking the cow, and attending to the other work.

"I don't see why your father doesn't come home," said his mother, as he came in with the last load of wood and began preparing himself for supper.

"I don't know. Why, is it any later than usual?" asked Philip.

"Why, yes, it is half an hour later than he usually comes."

"Oh, I suppose he has something extra to do and it is keeping him a little later than usual. He was busy when I passed there on my road home this evening." At that moment a sound of wagon wheels was heard coming up the road, and the next moment Mr. Brown came in.

"What has made you so late?" they inquired.

"Well, there was a runaway team in town, and I undertook to stop it, and by an awkward move someway I got thrown on the curbing and got pretty badly bruised up and didn't feel like walking, so I waited awhile for neighbor Davis to get to ride, and that is why I am so late."

"Are you very much hurt, Father?" asked Mrs. Brown anxiously.

"Oh, no, I don't think so; my arm got a pretty bad wrench, but the doctor thought it would soon be all right."

But the next day his arm was swollen quite badly, and it being his right arm, he was obliged to hire a blacksmith in his place. The doctor came and after examining his arm again said that it would probably be six or eight weeks before he would be able to do much of the heavy work in the shop again. This news was met with a good deal of dismay in the little home, for though his income made a comfortable living for the little family, yet the added expense of doctor's bills and the necessity of hiring a blacksmith in the shop left a very small income.

"Really, doctor, I can't afford to stay out of work that long."

"Well, you had better afford it if you want a strong arm again, for if you do not take care of it, it will never be any account, and it is better to lose a little time now than a whole lot after awhile."

So Mr. Brown had to content himself as best he might. It was not till that evening that Philip thought to tell them of the offer of Mr. Dixon.

"Well," said Mr. Brown, "that is a pretty good offer for a boy of your size, and that money would come in pretty handy this summer, now that I am laid up with these bruises and a lame arm. At least, you would be able to provide yourself with your own clothes and books for the next year if you were not going on your trip. But I suppose that is not to be thought of."

"Do you think it necessary, father, that I should give up my trip and stay at home this summer and accept the offer of Mr. Dixon?"

"Oh, no, I didn't say that it was necessary. You have planned your trip so long that it would be too bad to ask you to give it up now. Of course you could help us a lot by staying, but we will manage somehow and get along the best we can, won't we, Mother?"

"Yes, we will try to get along without you, Philip. It will run us pretty close. In fact, I don't know how we are going to make everything meet, but I guess we will make it some way," she replied.

Philip drew a long breath of relief. He felt so glad that they were not going to require him to give up his long cherished plans, and he went to bed with a light heart.

CHAPTER V

"IF ANY man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," were Philip's first waking thoughts the next morning, and which had seemed to rather startle him from his slumbers. "Let him deny himself," he repeated to himself as he sat up in bed wide awake, new thoughts crowding into his mind. All day Monday and Tuesday he had been watching for opportunities to put into practice the words of this text. But could it be possible that this was the opportunity? Surely it would not be required of him, it could not be expected of him that he should make so great a sacrifice. He had only expected to do this in little things. He had not expected encountering such a test as this. These were the thoughts that crowded rapidly through his mind as he again lay back on the pillow. Then again came the thoughts of how much his parents would be giving up in letting him go this summer, and how they would have to deny themselves in order to give him the necessary money and clothing he would be obliged to have for his trip, and following these would come again the thoughts of the pleasures he had so long looked forward to and planned. The more he thought about it the more perplexed and troubled he became and the heavier grew his heart.

"Oh, well," he said to himself as he arose and slowly drew on his shoes, "I may never have

another such a chance in my whole life, and it will not cost me very much, and as long as mother and father don't ask me to stay, they don't expect it, and, of course, don't think it is necessary, and I'll pay them back sometime when I am older. Anyhow," he concluded, "I just feel as though I could not do it, and whether it is right or wrong I am going anyway, so that is all there is about it. If father and mother really needed me they would say for me to stay at home, and I am not going to do so unless they say I must; besides, I don't think it matters much anyway." And thus settling the question, he walked down-stairs and went about his morning duties.

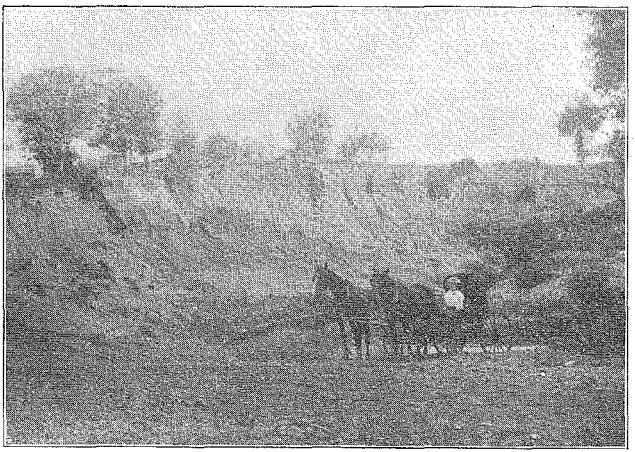
But if Philip thought the question was entirely disposed of he was very much mistaken. He tried not to think any more about it, but again and again it would recur persistently, and try every way he would he failed to drive it from his mind. Over and over again he would reason to himself that he had decided aright and that it was not required of him, and there was no use bothering himself about it. The more he reasoned or tried to reason he was right, the more it recurred to him and more often came the text to his mind.

Thursday passed, and Friday passed, and father's arm seemed to be no better and bade fair to be just as the doctor had said. School was out early Friday afternoon, and when Philip passed Mr. Dixon's store he was standing outside on the steps.

"Well, Philip, are you going on your trip?" he asked kindly.

"Yes, sir," replied Philip, not knowing hardly what to say.

"I didn't know whether the accident to your father would make any change in your arrange-



"AUNT MAY WAS OUT DRIVING THAT AFTERNOON."

ments or not. Thought if they did, you could still have the place if you wanted it."

"Thank you. Father and mother said they thought I could go anyway, so I hadn't given it up."

"All right, then; I didn't know, and thought I would speak about it again and tell you the place was still open for you."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Philip as he walked on, "I wish this accident hadn't happened to father. I do know they want me to stay, and need me so much, for I overheard them say as much last night when they thought I did not hear them. They only hate to disappoint me. I believe I will go and ask Aunt May what she thinks about it; but no, I almost know what she will say, and I do want to go so much."

As it happened, Aunt May was out driving that afternoon and overtook Philip on his way home. "Climb in and ride," she said to him, as she drew the rein on her ponies, and so it came about that Philip told her his trouble. It was quite impossible for him to keep from telling her any of his troubles after he had been with her a few moments even, though he knew just how she would view them, but there was something about Aunt May that always inspired confidence and an assurance of sympathy and help. And so he told her his hopes and desires of everything that had passed, and asked her what he ought to do.

"Now, Aunt May, you don't think it would be required of me to do this, do you? It would be giving up so much, it seems like I just can't; but it just keeps perplexing and bothering me so that I can't think of anything else," he said, as he finished. Aunt May listened quietly as they drove slowly along.

"Philip," she said gently, "I have had many such

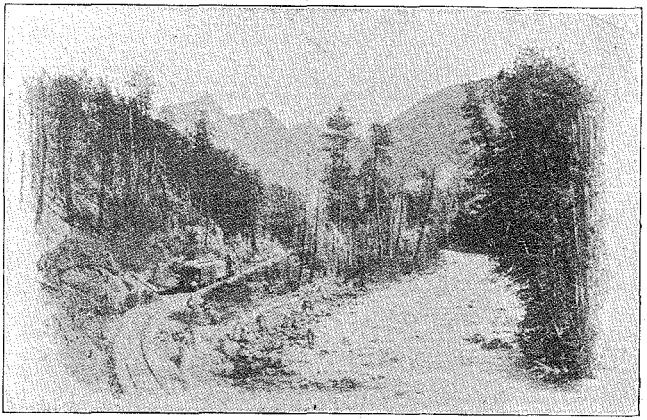
puzzling questions to perplex and bother me. I know it will be a great trial for you to give up this summer's trip with Rob, and if you think that your parents can get along well enough without you, I think you ought to go, for it will not only afford you much pleasure, but will be a benefit to you in many ways. I have been glad many times to know that you had such an opportunity, and knew that if you went and improved it, it would be of lasting benefit. But, on the other hand, we must be careful not to throw aside lightly duties or opportunities of greater importance lest we devote too much to pleasure. The pleasure path looks very pleasant to us sometimes, while the path of duty looks very stony and uninviting, but often we find that in choosing duty's side we have escaped dangers unseen, and find a certain joy and peace we never thought to find outside the fields of pleasure. You know the poet says, 'Sometimes the thing our life misses helps more than the things which it gets.' So, my child, I think the only safe plan is to take all such things to our heavenly Father, ask him to guide us in choosing the right, then leave the results all in his hands, trusting that whatever is best for our good will be done; and, Philip, when we do this, we need never fear the results. But here we are, now, at your door, and if you will do this, take it to him in earnest prayer, I feel sure that he will help you."

It was late, very late that night as Philip tossed

about on his bed, turning the question over and over in his mind. He felt quite satisfied now as to which was the right thing for him to do, yet it was a hard struggle for him to give it up. "Well," he sighed, "I shall never have any peace this way; I will ask him once more to help me do right," and climbing out of bed he once more on his knees sent up a simple, humble petition for help. As he arose a sense of peace and comfort thrilled him, and in another moment his decision was made. "I will go to Mr. Dixon the first thing in the morning and tell him I want the place. How selfish of me to think of going on that trip, and mother working herself to death while I am off having fun. I ought to be thankful that father didn't get killed, instead of moaning around and finding fault with Providence about the way things turned out. How much worse it might have been!" And having reached this decision he was soon sound asleep. In the morning he told his parents what he was going to do, and though they made some slight remonstrance, they felt glad that he had decided to stay, and also felt very much relieved. Philip, when his mind was once thoroughly made up, was not one to turn back, so after breakfast was over he walked down to the village and engaged to work for Mr. Dixon during the summer.

My little readers must not think that our friend Philip never felt any regrets for the pleasure he was denying himself in this matter. Far from it!

but he put such thoughts bravely aside as much as he could, and Monday morning instead of speeding away on the train to a vacation of hunting and



"INSTEAD OF SPEEDING AWAY ON THE TRAIN TO A VACATION OF HUNTING AND FISHING."

fishing and travel among the mountains, he began the daily routine of tying up bundles and carrying flour, potatoes, and butter to Mr. Dixon's various customers.

CHAPTER VI

MEANWHILE in the Brown home across the way another conflict had been going on this week, not so severe as Philip's, but a childish trial nevertheless. Amy's teacher had arranged for a drill which took several girls Amy's size, including

herself, and all were to dress in white. Amy's old white dress was brought out and laundered, but when her mother had lengthened it and fixed it as best she could, she found that the best she could do, it still looked rather shabby.

"Oh, mamma, I wish I could have a new dress," said Amy. "This does look so shabby, and all the other girls are going to have such pretty new dresses. Jessie Davis is going to wear a lovely white organdie trimmed in white silk lace and ribbon, and there isn't one of the girls but what has a better dress for the drill than this."

"Well," said her mother, "if I were feeling better I would try to get a new one made, even now. If I had thought this one had looked so shabby, I would have got a new one sooner, but it is Wednesday now, and I don't know, with the other work that I have to do before Friday, whether I can get it done or not, if I should get one."

"Oh, I do wish you could," said Amy.

"Well, I'll tell you, you take some money with you and get it this evening as you come home, and I will get it made if I can, and if I can't you will have to wear this."

"All right, mamma, I am so glad."

That evening as Amy was going home from school she stopped at the store and selected some pretty, fine white lawn for the new dress, and her mother cut it out that evening after she reached

home, but the next evening when she returned home there had not been much progress made on the dress, for Mrs. Brown had been very busy with her baking and other work that morning, and in the afternoon had suffered with a severe headache.

"There is not much done on your dress, dearie. My head has been aching so badly, but if you will do most of the evening work, my head is a little better now, and maybe I can get it finished by sitting up to-night."

Amy prepared most of the supper; and after washing the supper dishes and sweeping the dining-room, she put the younger children to bed and came into the sitting-room where her mother was patiently working on the dress.

"How are you getting along with it, mamma?"

"Rather slow, dearie. It seems that everything I try to do this evening goes wrong, and this work and the light makes my head hurt worse again."

Amy sat watching her mother's patient fingers and tired look for as much as half an hour. "It is very wrong indeed for me to ask so much of mamma when she is so tired," she thought to herself, "but I do want the new dress so much." Then the words of her text came to her mind: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." "This is a good chance for self-denial," she thought to herself, "and if my flower, self-denial, were flourishing, I

wouldn't ask her to do it. I could make my old dress do."

For fully half an hour the conflict went on, then Amy rose decidedly from her chair, and taking the work from her mother's hands, said quite gently,

"Never mind, mother, it will take you two or three hours to finish it, and I know you are not able to sit up to-night and work at it. My old dress will do as well as not. I will make it do."

"But, Amy, you will be very much disappointed, won't you? I am sorry to lay it aside unfinished, when you want it so much. I will work awhile longer, and maybe I can get it done."

"No, you are too tired now. I can get along all right," and Amy took the work from her mother's hands and began folding it up to put away.

"You are a dear, good girl, Amy, and such a comfort to me. Mamma is really ill to-night or she should not think of letting it go unfinished."

"I thought so. Now go to bed, mamma, and I will put the work away and straighten up the sitting-room."

And so it was that Amy wore her old dress the next day in the exercises, and though it looked shabby by the side of all the other pretty new ones, yet Amy's sparkling eyes and bright, happy countenance made up for the deficiencies in her dress.

The next Sunday afternoon the children all assembled for their customary chat with Aunt

May. Aunt May's gentle, kindly face seemed a very cheering one to Philip as they all drew around her, each one relating his own experiences and little trials during the past week. Only Philip remained silent. His disappointment had been too great to tell to any one excepting to Aunt May alone. Only she could understand just how much his decision had cost him, so he only sat quietly listening to the others. Aunt May felt very sorry for him. She felt that his disappointment had been very great indeed, and she understood his silence, so when all were through she turned to him and said gently, "Well, Philip, since you were to tell us a story from the Bible this time, we will listen to that now. Did you find one suitable?" And Philip told this story:

"There was once a young man who was very gifted in many ways. He also had a fine education, as good as the country in which he lived afforded, for, in fact, he was raised by a princess and had as much care bestowed upon him in his training as that of a king's own son. As a child he played in the courts and royal palaces and was treated with deference by all, but in truth he was of lowly birth, or what the people of that land considered lowly birth, for he belonged to a race of people who were then slaves to the king. As he grew older he loved his own people, and though he had always received much from the rulers, and had been kindly dealt with by them, yet it made

him feel very unhappy when he saw how they oppressed his people. One day while he was out in the fields he saw one of them beating his slave and in his anger he struck the man and killed him. Then fearing their anger, he left and went and lived in another land.

"At last the Lord came and told him that he wanted him to come and lead his people out of bondage, to get them out of this land and bring them back to their own land. At first he did not want to do it, for he thought he could not; but the Lord told him he would be with him and help him if he would go. So at last he gave up his peaceful, quiet, and happy life for a life of hardship, trial, and difficulty, that he might bring happiness to others of his people and release them from their bondage."

"Who was that?" asked Rob. "I don't remember of any one like that. Did I ever hear the story?"

"Oh, yes, you have heard it lots of times."

"I know," said Amy. "Don't you remember, Rob, about the little baby that was hidden among the bulrushes and found by the Egyptian princess and cared for by her until he was grown?"

"Oh, yes! that was Moses. I didn't think of him."

"Very good, Philip," said Aunt May. "Moses must have had a hard struggle before he at last consented to give up his peaceful, happy life in the land of Midian where he guarded his flocks, to

undertake such a responsibility as that of leader among his people. But God blessed him and ever helped him to perform the duties and tasks required of him, just as he will help and bless every one who will deny himself for his sake.

"And now I think we have each had some little lesson this week that has helped us, and we have perhaps talked long enough for this time. I have thought that for the next lesson we would study Obedience, and we will see whether we have any flowers growing in our garden by that name or not."

CHAPTER VII

"OBEDIENCE was our lesson to-day, was it not?" asked Aunt May as she seated herself in the midst of the little group the next Sunday.

"Yes, Aunt May, and you were to tell us the story this time," said Harry.

"Oh, yes, and let's hear the story first this time," said impulsive Rob. "I think we have all been pretty good children this week. I think I have because I haven't disobeyed mamma or papa even once, nor didn't pout about anything they told me to do."

"So have I," chimed in Harry, "'cause mamma said yesterday that I had been a real good boy all week and minded all the time."

"That's good," said Aunt May, "and I am very glad to hear it."

"Still room for improvement, though, I am afraid," added Philip.

"Not any more than yourself, Master Philip," retorted Harry.

"Oh, well," said Aunt May, "never mind; none of us ever get so good but that there is room for improvement, and perhaps no one of the many virtues are so sadly neglected as the one of obedience. The story I am going to tell is in regard to disobedience, and is one so familiar to you that it will be useless for me to leave out names. Long ago when God made this earth, it was a very beautiful world. We think it beautiful now, and so it is, but nothing to compare with what it was when it was first created.

"There was everything here to make it a peaceful, happy, and pleasant abiding-place for God's children. Not even were they barred from the light of his smile and the radiance of his countenance, for he walked and talked with them until by their own acts of disobedience to his commandments they forfeited the right to commune with him face to face, as well as the right to live in the beautiful garden in which he had placed them. Henceforth their lives must be that of hardship and toil, of pain and suffering, trial and temptation, ending at last in death. And since this great sin of our first parents, often and often has the world suffered in many ways through this one sin, disobedience. So after they had lost their right to

live in his presence, God, through his mercy and love for his children, formed a plan and a way by which, if they would adopt and be obedient to all the laws and commands therein, they might once more return into his presence and through perfect obedience to all the requirements in this plan be able to regain all which they had lost. So since obedience is the only way by which we can regain all this, we can readily see how essential it is for us to cultivate this virtue and obtain a correct understanding of what real, true obedience is. I have known people who have told me that it took them a lifetime to learn to be obedient, and I have seen others whom I thought never did learn, so the time to learn this, like every other virtue, is while we are little. That is why the apostle said, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.'

"It is here we learn our first lessons of obedience, then if obedient at home we will most likely be at school, and if at home and school, we will be less likely to break the laws of the land, and how much easier will it be for us then to conform to God's laws.

"I once knew a little boy whom I loved very much, for he was such a very bright, kind-hearted, and affectionate boy, but he had one great vice. He let the ugly weed disobedience grow so big that it crowded all the other virtues out of his heart. Disobedient at home, at school, and then

of the laws of his country, he at last suffered for his fault, and through long weary years of punishment at last learned his lesson. 'It was disobedience that wrecked me,' he said to me one day as I visited him in his cell with the hope of comforting him. 'I can now trace it all back to that, for I never heeded counsel, advice, or commands unless I was compelled to do so. I was sometimes obedient through fear, but seldom from a sense of right,' which kind of obedience, my children, if obedience it can be called, is far removed from the true spirit of obedience. That kind which prompts us to act through fear is but the outward form, while that which prompts us to obey because we want to be obedient to that which is right, is obedience in the truest sense of the word. One girl says, 'I must finish this piece of work this morning or my mother will punish me.' Another one says, 'I will do this because my mother told me to do this, and I love to do what she tells me to do. I could not be happy to go and play and leave what she told me to do unfinished.' Which do you think has the most obedient heart, and which do you think will be most likely to listen and heed the advice and counsel from wiser ones in the years to follow?"

"The latter one of course," said Amy; "and the first one, when she gets older and can do as she pleases without fear of punishment, will probably do as she pleases and make many mistakes."

"And thereby," said Aunt May, "place herself in

the way of many temptations. And now one more thought, and then we will be through for to-day. God loves an obedient spirit. He has given us commandments that he has asked us to keep and obey, and he has said in his word that those that love him will keep his commandments, not those that are afraid of him. We should not keep the commandments of God because we are afraid he will punish us if we don't, but because we want to do what he tells us and because we love him, and because we are thankful that he has shown us a way whereby we can again return into his presence. Let us not forget this lesson but try each day to cultivate this virtue in our hearts and be ever ready to be obedient to laws that are right. Our next lesson will be Humility, and I think you will find more to study and think about than you have any idea of.

CHAPTER VIII

IT WAS a very happy little band that dispersed that Sunday evening after the lesson on obedience. A very self-satisfied little band, too, I may say, for in their efforts of late to put into practice each lesson as they studied it, they had seemed to have a succession of victories and they were beginning to feel quite elated over the matter, and felt quite assured that the experiment was proving a success. Therefore they looked forward with new

zeal to the lesson of this week, feeling quite assured that they would have equal success in practicing humility, for it looked easier than any of the others they had yet tried. Indeed, their conduct had improved much of late under the influence of these lessons which had been noted and praised by their elders, whose words of praise and commendation had not fallen on deaf ears, for children (and grown folks, too) love praise too well, sometimes.

As for Rob, he had made great strides in his efforts to overcome his temper, which had always been his great fault, and he had also checked his desire for playing tricks. His conduct had been so much improved in this direction that it was often remarked about, until Rob had a pretty good opinion of himself, and began to consider himself a very good pattern for other boys to follow. Harry compared himself very favorably with three or four of the village waifs, who had known no education except what they had learned in the street, and which consisted in the main of smoking cigar stubs and talking coarse language. Certainly he would never think of doing such things, therefore he must be quite a gentleman.

Amy had been one who had always been praised for her lovely disposition; gentle, tender-hearted, kind, and affectionate she was, and with temper always under control, she won unstinted praise

from all until she began to think she was little short of angelical.

As for Nelly, she could not boast of having such a sweet temper, but she had a pretty face and a sweet, childish voice for singing, and that little weed vanity was growing in her heart very fast.

Philip received two excellent letters from his uncle and aunt, which, although they spoke of their disappointment in his not coming, commended him for his self-denial and courage, and together with the praise of others for his action in the matter, made him feel that he was quite a hero. Aunt May had not failed to notice this boastful feeling which prevailed among the children of late, and which cropped out now and then in words and actions, and she hoped by the study of the lesson this week that they would be enabled to see their fault and begin at once to correct it; therefore she was not surprised the following Sunday to see several sober little faces, each wearing a very different expression from that of the previous Sunday.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "What makes you all look so sober? Have you been having trouble this week?"

"Oh, Aunt May," cried Rob, "I guess we all thought we were pretty good children until you gave us this lesson, and I guess now we've found out we are not half as good as we thought we were," and he went on to tell how much better he

and Harry felt they were than poor little Jimmy Watkins, who had scarcely known a friend in the world, and how they laughed at him when he came to Sunday-school in old clothes that were mostly patches until he had quit coming because he had nothing better to wear, and he did not want to go to be laughed at, and how much more Jimmy had shown them he could practice kindness when he got into a mudhole to get their packages out to save them from getting their clothes muddy, and how mean they felt ever since about the way they had treated him.

Amy's temper had for once got the better of her that week, and together with a couple of lessons on pride, convinced her that she fell far short of the perfect mark.

Nelly found, too, that there were other talents quite as remarkable as a good voice, and that there were other things of more importance than a pretty face, though both were good gifts for which she should be thankful, not boastful.

Philip had found that he had given himself much more credit than he deserved for doing only that which was his duty.

"You have learned the lesson better this week than I thought you would," said Aunt May. "Do you know that I have noticed lately that those ugly weeds, pride and vanity, have been getting very large and the poor, little sweet flower, humility, has been nearly crowded out of your hearts?

Humility is one of the sweetest flowers, and we must not let it get crowded out of our hearts. Pride is one of the worst weeds, and if we let it get started to growing, there is soon not much room for anything else. Do you remember Saul? How humble he was when the Lord chose him to be king, and how when the Lord blessed him and prospered him his heart became filled with pride because of his position? Then the Lord took the kingdom away from him and appointed another king in his stead, for he wanted a king who was humble so that he might do greater good among the people. So if we want to do good we must shut out pride, for God can not use us in his purposes if our hearts are filled with pride. We can find no grander example of humility than the marvelous one set forth by our loving Savior, he who had all power, both in heaven and in earth, and was competent to govern kingdoms, yet working at the carpenter's bench until time for his work in the ministry, his life among the poor and lowly, and his work simply going about doing good. He healed even the beggars, and he chose the poor fishermen for his disciples and dearest friends. Do you think if little Jimmy Watkins had gone to him for help he would have sent him away and laughed at him because his clothes were old and patched? Ah, no! Jesus looks at the heart, not the clothes, and don't you think you boys had better go to Jimmy and ask his forgiveness, and tell him

you want him to come back into your Sunday-school class?"

"Yes, Aunt May, we will, we will."

"And I have some money that I earned myself, and I'll give him part of that to help him buy a new suit so he will have something better to wear to Sunday-school," said Rob.

"That is more like it. That is the kind of a spirit to show. Be a servant unto those that need help, instead of saying, 'I am better than thou,' and passing by. And now, my children, we have studied several of these flowers that if we cultivate and guard and keep constant watch over, will help us in many ways. Kindness, self-denial, obedience, and humility don't seem to be very great acts to perform in our daily lives. How often do we look forward to some greater deed that we think would be so grand to do, and let these little opportunities slip by. They look so small to us it doesn't matter whether we do them or not, we think. One little drop of rain does not seem to amount to much, but one drop follows another, and then another falls, until by and by the water begins to trickle down the hills and the brooks are swollen, and soon we see a great stream. So one little good deed seems so insignificant to us, but if we try to fill each day of our lives with here a deed of kindness and there an act of love and self-sacrifice, did you ever think how after awhile we will have a grand stream of them which fills

our lives? Then as the days go by we can look back and see what we have done, and by so doing the little things that have come to our hands we will be better able to meet and grasp greater opportunities."

And now, my little readers, we will take leave of Aunt May and her boys and girls, trusting that they will continue to cultivate and cherish those rare plants which will shed radiance through their whole lives, casting out all the obnoxious weeds, allowing room for only that which is good, thus filling their lives with that which will bring them true happiness, and brightening the pathway of others.

BIRTH OFFERINGS.

The following is a list of the names of those whose birth offerings have contributed to the publication of this volume:

Lei Ora Isabella Gard, Hamburg, Iowa.
Nova Isabella Wood, Macedonia, Iowa.
Kenneth Hazelwood Hughes, Macedonia, Iowa.
Henry Wendell Phillips, Boston, Massachusetts.
Benjamin Joseph Phillips, Preston, Connecticut.
Josiah Clark Phillips, Sacramento, California.
Clara Gerrish Phillips, Preston, Connecticut.
Mary Margaret Everett, Union, Nebraska.
Agnes Emeline Luff, Independence, Missouri.
Robert Meredith Elvin, Lamoni, Iowa.
Elvin Kenneth Luff, Independence, Missouri.
Wayne Edward Luff, Independence, Missouri.
David Elvin Morgan, Cleveland, Iowa.
Margery Emily Wilcox, Shenandoah, Iowa.
Ruth Lucile Grenawalt, Lamoni, Iowa.
Ardetia Shippy, Lamoni, Iowa.
Lillie E. Bentley, Lamoni, Iowa.
Edith Lucile Monroe, Lamoni, Iowa.
Arthur Alfred Monroe, Lamoni, Iowa.
Lottie Helen Monroe, Lamoni, Iowa.
Velva Williamson.
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Elsie Leona Carroll.
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Helen Dorothy McDonald, Omaha, Nebraska.
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May Horton, Chicago, Illinois.
Viola Horton, Chicago, Illinois.
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Zelda Fohrman, Stewartsville, Missouri.
Walter Russell Snively, Lamoni, Iowa.
Courtney Allen Barker, Onaway, Michigan.
Alvin Elder Fisher, Weyburn, Assiniboia, Canada.

Thirza Adelaide Chapman, Persia, Iowa.
Roy Arthur Chapman, Persia, Iowa.
Lois Emma Fern Chapman, Persia, Iowa.
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