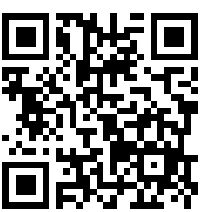

Frontispiece. THE NEW SCHOLAR. *See page* 106.

THE

Wonderful Story

OF

GENTLE HAND,

AND OTHER STORIES.

By T. S. ARTHUR.

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CONTENTS

GENTLE HAND.

WONDERFUL STORY OF GENTLE HAND.

I'M going to tell you about a child who lived a great many years ago in a far-away country—a little deformed and homely child. When only two years old, she fell and hurt herself very badly and had to lie in bed a long time. A great hump grew on her back, her breast-bone was pushed out and her head was drawn down between her shoulders. Her face lost its healthy color and roundness, and had a pale, pinched look that was sad to see.

She was unlovely in all eyes save the eyes of her widowed mother, who lived in a mean little cottage, for they were very poor. The child's name was Elsie.

One gloomy day in mid-winter, when the air was full of snow and the north winds rushing and roaring through the great forest, a woodman, in passing the poor widow's cottage, noticed that no smoke came out of the chimney, and he said to himself:

"What does this mean? I must stop and see. The widow Hermann may be sick."

So he turned aside and knocked at the door. But as no one bade him come in, he lifted the latch and entered the cottage. How cold and still it was! No fire on the hearth and no sign of life.

Then he pushed open a little chamber door, and saw a sight that drew tears to his eyes. On the bed, with a white but peaceful face, lay the widow Hermann, and close beside her was Elsie—the mother in the land of spirits, the child in the land of dreams. For a moment or two the woodman stood gazing at the two pale faces, and then turned noiselessly away and left the cottage. His own poor hut was nearly half a mile distant, and he ran all the way through the blinding snow.

"Oh, Felice," he cried, in a panting voice, as he swung open the door of his hut, "the widow Hermann is dead!"

"Well," answered Felice, coldly, "we've all got to die one time or another. It's her time now, that's all."

"But," said the woodman, "I found her dead in her cottage. I was going by and saw no smoke coming from the chimney, and so I went in to see what was the matter, and there she lay dead, with little Elsie asleep by her side. Such a sight! I haven't got over it yet!" And the man shivered.

Now, Felice was not tender of feeling like her husband, but a cold, selfish, hard-hearted woman.

"It's no matter of ours," she answered. "Let somebody else find it out."

At this the woodman got angry and spoke roughly to his

wife, calling her evil names. A violent quarrel ending in blows would have followed had not a little old woman with a wrinkled face, her cloak white with snow, pushed open the door of their hut and cried, reproachfully,

"For shame, good neighbors!"

"Why, Gretchen!" said the woodman, in surprise, turning to the small, quaint figure that stood in the door. "It's no day for you to be out."

"I'm neither salt nor sugar," answered the woman, with a strange little laugh that had in it something pleasant and cheery. "All days are alike to me when there's good to be done."

"Where are you going?" asked the woodman.

"To the widow Hermann's. She was sick yesterday. And

Hans Gobreight, who drove by her cottage this morning, says he didn't see any smoke coming out of her chimney."

Felice and her husband exchanged glances.

"Then I'll go with you," said the woodman.

"Ah! that's good!" exclaimed old Gretchen. "You were always a kind neighbor."

The woodman spoke in low tones to his wife, but she answered sharply:

"I wonder at you, Paul, when you know I'm cramped and aching with rheumatism! It would be the death of me to go out on a day like this."

Then she drew her husband aside and said to him in a low whisper:

"Mind ye, Paul, and don't bring that ugly Elsie home with you! I won't have her."

The woodman and the little old woman, Frau Gretchen, went in the thickly-falling snow to the lonely cottage on the roadside. They found everything just as when Paul was there an hour before—the mother in the land of spirits and Elsie in the land of dreams—but did not waken the child until a fire was kindled. Then Paul lifted her up tenderly, and carried her out of the chamber where she had been sleeping beside her dead mother.

Poor little Elsie! Homely, deformed and almost helpless, what was to become of her? As the woodman held her in his arms he thought of this, and a sad feeling came into his heart. He looked into her pinched, colorless face, and it was unlovely in his eyes—nay, almost repulsive. The hump on her back

came sharply against his breast and made him shiver. He was about putting her down on the floor, so strong was the feeling of dislike that came over him, when her soft little hand was laid on his, touching it gently as a falling snow-flake, but with a living warmth that seemed to dissolve and run down to his heart, making it glow with a new and tender delight.

The arm that was relaxing tightened its hold on Elsie, and she was drawn closer against the woodman's breast. What did this mean? The little baby-fingers—for they were small as a baby's—still rested on Paul's great rough hand, and the current of love kept running down to his heart, and thrilling it with a strange pleasure such as he had never known. And now, when he looked into the pale, wan face, it did not seem repulsive; nay, its very homeliness was gone, and in its stead he saw something soft and pure and tender that won his love. It was a wonderful transformation.

Old Gretchen came out from the chamber of death, and stood for a while looking at the child, who was still held closely against the woodman's heart.

"Take the baby home, good neighbor," she said, "and then go for the Sisters."

"I will take her to the Sisters," answered Paul.

But Gretchen said,

"No, no! Felice and you are childless. Take her home."

Then Gretchen put warm garments around Elsie to protect her from the snow and cold, and the woodman carried her to his hut. When Felice saw him enter with the child in his arms, she flew into a great passion.

"Why did you bring the ugly wretch here?" she cried. "Take her to the Sisters!" And she waved her hand toward the door.

The poor child shrank in terror against the woodman's breast. One little soft hand lay in his, and the magic of its touch filled his heart with love and courage.

Paul did not heed his wife, but sat down with the child in his arms, and commenced taking off the thick wrappings that old Gretchen had put round her.

"Take her away! Take her away!" cried Felice, more angrily. "Take her to the Sisters!"

But Paul answered firmly: "No, Felice. We will keep the poor little thing. She has no mother now, and you will be a mother to her."

On hearing this the woman became more enraged, and threatened to fling Elsie out into the snow if her husband did not take the child off instantly.

And now a wonderful thing happened. Elsie struggled out of the kind arms that held her, and standing before the woman, touched one of her hands gently. A quick change was seen in the woman's face. An angry word died half spoken on her tongue. She stood very still, though a moment before her body swayed with passion.

The child's soft hand rested on the woman's hand so lightly that it seemed like down. A long silence. Then Felice said in a voice that trembled with feeling,

"Poor little one!" And stooping down, she gathered the child into her arms and kissed her pale face with motherly ten-

EASTER EGGS.

See page 86.

derness. As she did so, the hand of Elsie was laid on her face, and it seemed as if a new life came out of the hand, warm and sweet, and full of tenderness and love.

"We will keep her, Paul," said his wife, "and I will be a mother to her."

Did Elsie know of the strange power that lay in her small hand? I think she did. It was soft and weak as a baby's, and yet so wonderfully strong that its touch could change anger into love. What a gift it was! Better for her, poor little motherless one! deformed in body and unlovely in countenance, than to have been the possessor of great riches, for gold does not bring love—love, the best and sweetest thing in life.

Leaving Elsie with his wife, the woodman went through the fast-falling snow to the convent not far off, and told the Sisters of poor widow Hermann's death, as Gretchen had desired him to do, and then returned home, for he felt troubled about Elsie, knowing his wife's hardness and bad temper. He would not have been greatly surprised if he had found little Elsie shivering in the snow outside of his hut. The magic of her touch he did not yet understand. He had felt its power, yet did not perceive clearly from whence it came. The love born of that touch was very sweet, but his dull mind did not see how, like an electric current, it had leaped from her fingers to his heart, and from her fingers to the heart of Felice.

Paul did not find Elsie lying in the snow outside of his hut, but fast asleep, with her head resting peacefully on the bosom of Felice, who raised her fingers in silent warning as he entered, and then let her eyes fall with a gaze of tenderness on the

child, whose soft hand lay closely shut within one of her own. Paul came and sat down by his wife, and bent lovingly over the sleeping little one.

"She isn't at all homely," whispered Felice, gazing down at the poor pinched face. "I never saw such beautiful hair;" and she lifted some of it on her fingers. "It is like spun gold! And such soft skin, Paul! I've been looking at it for ever so long. See how the blue veins run across her temples and over her eyelids and down her white neck! Oh, I think her almost handsome, Paul. We will keep her. She shall be ours—our own Elsie, if she is deformed, poor little one!"

And Felice could not help kissing the child just as a fond mother would have done. Elsie's large eyes opened, and she looked wonderingly and half frightened into the faces bending over her. They were so full of love that her heart took courage and the scared look vanished.

The child did not ask for her mother, but by her sorrowful face and eyes every now and then filling with tears, it was plain to the woodman and his wife that Elsie knew her mother was dead, and the pity they felt made them love her the more.

Now, the Sisters at the convent, when they heard that Elsie had been taken home by Paul, said one to another,

"This will never do. Felice is cold, selfish and cruel, and will be unkind to the child. She must come into the convent as one of God's poor."

And they sent two of their number to the woodman's hut to bring Elsie away.

The stormy day was drawing to its close. Felice was busy

getting supper, and Paul sat near the fire with Elsie on his knee. There was a rap on the door, and the two Sisters from the convent, their black garments covered with snow, entered and said to Paul and his wife:

"We have come for little Elsie."

"And will go back without her!" answered Felice, flashing up angrily and going quickly over to where Paul sat with the child. She had no respect for any one nor fear of any one when her will was crossed.

"Her mother is in heaven, and she is one of God's poor who are given into our care," said the Sisters, gently.

"God has given her into our care, good Sisters," spoke out Paul, mildly but firmly. "She is our child now, and we will love her as our own."

As Felice stood by her husband and Elsie, her eyes full of angry defiance, like some wild beast whose young were threatened, the Sisters saw a strange thing that filled them with wonder. A little hand reached out and laid itself gently on the woman's hand. Then the fire went out of her eyes, the hardness and anger from her lips, and a motherly tenderness and softness stole over her countenance. Stooping down, she kissed the child fondly, then lifted her into her arms. Elsie laid her head with a low murmur of satisfaction against the bosom of Felice, and looked into the eyes that were bent upon her with love and confidence.

"It is kind in you to come for her, good Sisters," said Felice, in so changed a voice that they marveled still more, "but she is our child, and we cannot let her go, because we love her."

The Sisters went back to the convent, wondering at what they had seen and heard, and unable to understand its meaning.

That night, after Elsie was asleep, Paul and his wife sat talking together, and soon fell into their old bad habit of speaking roughly to each other. Felice had a very sharp tongue, the thrust of which Paul could not always stand, and so they often got to quarreling. Their loud and angry voices soon awoke the child, who started up in affright. But love quickly overcame her fear. In an instant, gliding like a spirit across the floor, she was at the side of Felice, her soft hand resting on that of the angry woman, and the sweetness and gentleness of her own pure heart going in warm currents to that of the other.

Ah! we have the secret of Elsie's power now. It was love. The reaching forth of her hand was only an effort to give of her love with all its gentle sweetness, and the touch of that hand was like a good deed, full of blessing.

Anger went out like a candle blown on suddenly, and peace came in where passion had ruled a moment before. The woodman and his wife grew dumb in the presence of a child.

It was known to all the neighbors far and near that the woodman's wife was a hard and passionate woman, and when they heard that Elsie had gone to live with her, every one pitied the child and said that her life would be wretched. What was their surprise when it was told by one and another who happened to call in at the woodman's hut that Elsie was happy in her new home, and that Felice was kind and loving to her as a mother!

The Sisters told what they had seen, and this neighbor and that told what she had seen, and all agreed that the child had some wonderful power in her hands, for at their softest touch the fire had been seen to go out of angry faces. Soon the neighbors began to speak of the child as "Gentle Hand," and the fame of her magic touch spread far and wide, until it came to the ears of a lady, the wife of a great lord, who lived in a castle. Now, the name of this lady was Margaret, and she had five children—two sons and three daughters—and there was strife among these children always, so that the lady had no comfort with them, but was, on account of this strife, almost heartbroken at times.

When the Lady Margaret heard of Gentle Hand and the strange power of her softest touch—how it subdued anger and filled all hearts with kindness and love—she said to herself, "I must see this wonderful child, and if all be true that is told of her, I will bring her home to the castle and set her among my children."

So she went in her carriage almost a day's journey to the woodman's hut—for she lived a long way off—to see Elsie, or Gentle Hand, as we must call her. Now, it happened that on this very day Felice had died, after a sudden illness that lasted only a few hours, and when the Lady Margaret came to the woodman's hut she found death and sorrow therein.

"Is there a child here called Gentle Hand?" she asked of Paul, who met her at the door of his poor hovel.

"There is a child here called Elsie," answered the wondering Paul.

"May I see her?" said the Lady Margaret as she stepped down from her carriage.

Paul made a sign for her to enter, and in the next moment she stood in the presence of the dead woman, who had been laid out by the Sisters, two of whom sat near the body. A child with a wan, shrunken, almost repulsive face looked up as she came in, and gazed at her through tearful eyes.

"That is Elsie," said the woodman.

"You have another child here?" said the lady.

"Only Elsie," replied the woodman with a sorrowful tenderness that did not escape the lady's notice.

Lady Margaret was silent for some moments. She felt greatly disappointed. This she thought was not the child in search of whom she had come so far. There had been some mistake. Then she asked about the dead wife of Paul, and while the Sisters answered her questions she held out her hand in pity toward Elsie, but the child did not move.

"Will you not come and speak to me?" asked the lady.

"Go to her, Elsie," said the Sisters.

Then the child went slowly across to where the Lady Margaret sat, and laid one of her soft little hands in that which had been stretched out to her.

The Sisters, who were looking at Lady Margaret, saw her face flush and change. She fixed her gaze in a searching kind of way on the child's countenance, while a tender light began to shine in her eyes.

"Is this the child they call Gentle Hand?" she asked, in a subdued voice, looking at the Sisters.

"Many call her Gentle Hand," they replied.

Then the lady, moved, it seemed, by a feeling she could not control, stooped over Elsie and kissed her lips and forehead with loving tenderness. The soft hand with its magic touch still lay in hers, and now she held it tightly.

"Will you go home and live with me?" asked the lady.

Elsie drew away quickly and went over to the side of Paul, who was standing by his dead wife. Paul, who had heard what the lady said, took up Elsie and held her for a little while closely to his breast. Then crossing the room, he laid her light and tiny form in the arms of Lady Margaret, saying as he did so, in a broken voice:

"My poor hut is no place for her now."

Rising quickly, ere Elsie could object the lady bore her out to her carriage, and a moment after they were driven rapidly away.

Bewildered, passive, helpless, the child made no resistance, but sat very still on the cushioned seat opposite the lady. It seemed to her that all this was a dream, and that she would soon awaken. Her heart was full of sorrow for Felice, who had been kind to her as a mother.

The Lady Margaret saw the sorrow in her homely little face, and pity, mingled with a strange yearning love, stirred her heart, so she reached out her hand and said:

"Come and sit beside me."

As Elsie moved to obey she grasped the extended hand. In the next moment she was lifted into Lady Margaret's arms and drawn closely to her bosom, a new, strange feeling darting

through her. The magic touch of the child's hand had sent a quick thrill of tenderness to her heart.

"Is it a fairy child?" said the lady to herself, wonderingly, "or an angel disguised in a poor, deformed body?"

It was an angel disguised, or rather imprisoned, in a body of flesh. The lady's thought had reached the truth.

Every moment, as the hand of Elsie continued to rest in hers, the Lady Margaret felt her love grow deeper and stronger. Looking down upon the child's face, it seemed to change in her eyes; the pale skin had a semi-transparent texture and a warmth of color as from light within. The features lost their pinched aspect, rounding to a softer fullness. What was homely, almost repulsive, a little while before, now put on a garment of beauty.

Nor was all this a mere fancy. Part of the transformation was real. If the purity and innocence of Elsie, with whose spirit angels dwelt in close companionship, though she knew it not, made itself felt in other hearts by the touch of her hand, the love she awakened by this touch came back in returning currents to her own heart, and thence flushed her face, giving it a semblance of beauty.

The lady bent over Elsie and kissed her on lips and cheeks and forehead.

"Will you love me?" asked the child, putting up her small arms and clasping them around the lady's neck.

"Yes, if you will go home with me and be like one of my own children," answered the Lady Margaret, again kissing her fondly.

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HOW BOBBY RYAN CAME NEAR BEING DROWNED.

See page 89.

"Will *they* love me?" asked Elsie, a shadow falling across her face as she looked down at her poor garments.

For a little while the lady did not speak. Ah, too well she knew that no love awaited the child! But then, as she felt the soft arms clasping her neck, she said in her heart, "She is an angel, and where an angel dwells there will be love." Speaking aloud she answered:

"Love brings love. Oh yes! They cannot help loving you."

Elsie gazed long into the tender eyes that bent over her; then her head sank upon the Lady Margaret's bosom, and as the carriage rocked her gently like an infant in a cradle, she fell asleep.

Lord Hubert, the husband of Lady Margaret, was a bold, passionate, wicked man, feared by all over whom he had any power. Carl, his oldest son, a boy of fifteen, had all the bad qualities of his father, and was as active in stirring up strife at home as his father too often was among his neighbors. Helen, younger by two years than Carl, was self-willed and exacting, and Ursula, ten years of age, had a fiery temper that no discipline or punishment had been able to restrain. Hubert, seven years old, and Lilli, in her fifth summer, took from their mother more of her gentle character than the rest, but their lives were often made miserable by their older brothers and sisters, who took an evil delight in tormenting them.

Into such a home as this the Lady Margaret brought the unlovely crippled child. Gentle Hand was sound asleep among the cushions in the carriage when they arrived, long

after nightfall, at the castle, and a servant was ordered to lift her softly and to carry her to one of the chambers.

Lord Hubert had grown impatient at his wife's long absence, and met her with angry words. The children had been quarreling among themselves, as usual, and filled her ears with complaints and accusations.

"Where have you been?" demanded her husband, a dark frown on his face, as soon as they were alone.

The Lady Margaret answered truly that she had been a long distance in search of a child about whom she had heard strange things, and that she had found the child and brought her home, but she did not say what the strange things were.

At this Lord Hubert grew more angry, and said that he would not have other people's children brought into the castle without his consent. Lady Margaret pleaded with him, but this only made him the more violent.

"Where is the child?" he demanded.

The Lady Margaret took him into the chamber where the servant had borne Gentle Hand, and they found the weary child lying asleep on the bed.

"The fright!" cried Lord Hubert as his eyes rested on her pinched and homely face. Gentle Hand started up at his angry voice.

"Take her away!" He spoke in stern command to a servant, who went quickly to the bed and lifted Gentle Hand in her arms. But as the child clung about her neck and she felt the touch of her soft hand, a strange thing happened. She stood motionless for an instant, a gleam of surprise in her face,

and then she put the child back gently and with a reverent air, bending over and gazing upon her with looks of tenderest love.

At this Lord Hubert became furious, and laying his hand on the servant, drew her violently from the bed. Then he caught up the child, saying, in his cruel anger,

"I will throw her out of the window!" and strode across the floor, meaning to do what he had said. But stopping suddenly, a look half of wonder, half of fear, on his bold, bad face, he gazed down at the child. Lady Margaret, who had started forward with a cry of terror, stood still also, and looking closely, saw that a hand of Elsie's was clinging tightly to one of Lord Hubert's.

What a moment of joy for the heart of Margaret! Tears gushed from her eyes. She clasped her hands together, and looking upward, gave thanks to God.

As for Lord Hubert, he seemed to himself to be in a dream. Suddenly all anger toward this child had gone out of him, and in its stead there had come into his heart a tender feeling, like that of a mother for her baby.

"Don't be afraid, my poor child," he said, in so changed a voice and with so changed a manner that it seemed to those that heard him as if another man were speaking; "I will not harm a hair of your head."

Then looking toward Lady Margaret, who was crying for joy, he asked,

"What is her name?"

"She is called Gentle Hand," was the answer.

"Gentle Hand! Gentle Hand!" And Lord Hubert looked more bewildered as he repeated the name.

Then the Lady Margaret went up close to her husband, and speaking softly in his ear, so that the child could not hear her words, said,

"I think she is an angel."

A shade of reverence, not unmingled with fear, passed over the bold's man's face. He made a movement to lay Gentle Hand on the bed from which he had taken her, but as he did so she turned and clung to him, saying, "Won't you love me?" in tones that sounded sweet to his ears.

Love flooded his heart with a passionate tenderness not to be repressed, and drawing the child close to his bosom, he held her there for a long time. Then he kissed her fondly, answering, as he laid her back upon the bed,

"Oh yes! I will love you."

A heavenly smile lit up the face of Gentle Hand, and her eyes were bright as stars.

The words that Lady Margaret had spoken, "I think she is an angel," made a deep impression on Lord Hubert. As he stood looking down upon her, a soft light seemed to spread over and around her face, and all the features to change into lineaments of beauty. The tender reverence felt for her a little while before grew stronger, and when Lady Margaret said, in a low voice, "She has been sent to us from heaven," he felt that it was so.

On the next morning, as Carl, the eldest son of Lord Hubert, was coming down the great stone staircase that led to the

hall, he saw his little sister Lilli on one of the landings, sitting by the side of a strange child. Now, Carl was a born tyrant, and never let an opportunity for oppressing or annoying any one pass unimproved. The sight of a poor little hunchback with a pale, unlovely face, instead of touching his heart with pity, filled him with an evil desire to give her pain.

"Ho!" he cried, in a harsh, cruel voice, and springing down the stairway, stood in front of the children, grinning and frowning at them by turns, and trying to frighten the little stranger.

"Go away, Carl, you bad boy!" said Lilli as she jumped up and stood between her brother and Gentle Hand.

"Oh what a fright! Where did she come from? Who is she? I'll get a cage and show her off like a bear or an ape." And Carl, as he said this, took hold of Lilli and tried to push her away, so that he might come close up to Gentle Hand.

But Lilli, gentle and sweet as she was by nature, had a brave young heart, and now that her cruel brother talked of putting this poor little stranger into a cage, all fear left her, and she stood bravely in front of Gentle Hand, and resisted the efforts of Carl to thrust her aside. Then he grew very angry, and his loud voice rang up the stairway and along the halls, reaching even to the chamber where his father lay sleeping, and arousing him from slumber. In vain were all dear little Lilli's brave efforts to protect Gentle Hand from the rude assaults of her brother. Carl, maddened by her resistance, dragged her fiercely away, and threatened to fling her down the stairs.

Frightened more for Gentle Hand than herself, Lilli, as soon

as she could get free from Carl, ran wildly to her father's chamber, and as she flung open the door cried,

"Oh come! Come quickly! Carl is going to put a poor little lame girl in a cage. Oh, don't let him, for she's good."

Then Lord Hubert knew that it was Gentle Hand of whom Lilli spoke, and he ran out into the hall and across to the stairway. All was silent now. Lord Hubert bent over the balustrade, and looking down, saw a sight that made his heart leap and then tremble down into a strange stillness. Carl stood, as fixed as a statue, just in front of the child, looking upon her with a tender surprise in his face. She had reached out one of her hands, that lay softly on one of his. Lady Margaret was by his side looking down also at the group below them.

"The good God has sent an angel into our house," she whispered as she gazed upon Lord Hubert with tearful eyes.

Lord Hubert did not answer, but went back to his chamber, saying, in his heart,

"It must be an angel."

And now a new feeling came into his heart, and he was able to perceive in goodness a beauty and desirableness never seen before. As he thought of the power that lay in the touch of this child, his wonder increased. What could it all mean?

The power of a strong right arm wielding a sword, a spear or a battle-axe was something he could understand. But here was a mystery that baffled him, and the more he thought about it, the more he was puzzled.

Below all this wonder and bewilderment lay a sense of pleasure so new to Lord Hubert that, as he thought of it, won-

der had a fresh increase. A state of feeling had been born in his soul, which, every time the image of Gentle Hand grew distinct in his mind, moved him with a strong impulse to better things.

"Tell me all you know about this Gentle Hand," he said to Lady Margaret, and she told him all she knew—how she had heard strange stories about a child with such a wonderful touch that it not only made every one love her, but changed anger into gentleness, and how she had gone a long way to see this child, and found everything she had heard about her true.

And Lord Hubert said: "It is well. If she bring love and peace to our castle, then is she sent of God."

Never had Lady Margaret seen him so softened, or heard him speak after this manner.

"It is a wonderful hand," Lord Hubert said, speaking as if to himself. "I can feel it now, sweet in its touch as a strain of music to the ear, and as penetrating to the soul. Hark!"

A jangle of harsh voices rang through the hall—children's voices, in which, louder than the rest, were those of Carl and Helen. A shadow of pain fell over the face of Lady Margaret, and one of anger over that of Lord Hubert, who strode out from his chamber and down the great stairway to the hall below, where he found Carl, Helen and Ursula in a fierce quarrel. Carl had a heavy whip in his hand, and had just raised the large end to strike Ursula, when, swift and silent as a bird, Gentle Hand came flying in among the angry children, and, before Lord Hubert could spring forward and grasp the

arm of Carl, had, by a touch, made it weak for any cruel work as an infant's.

Over the boy's face there spread a blush of shame, and he said to Gentle Hand,

"I was only in play."

And Gentle Hand answered him,

"Don't even pretend; it is so dreadful to be angry and cruel."

A deep silence and peace fell on parents and children as they stood in the great hall, looking at the pale, shrunken, deformed child, and all the eyes that looked upon her were full of love.

One day, not long after Gentle Hand came to the castle, Lord Hubert got into a great rage at Lady Margaret for something she had said or done. When he was in a passion he always became violent, and sometimes gave cruel blows. On this occasion he stormed about in a threatening way, and Lady Margaret was in terror at his wild passion. No one was near them except Lilli, their youngest child, a sweet little tender-hearted girl.

Lilli looked frightened at first, but in a moment or two the fear went out of her face. Then there came over it a calm, serious expression, and she went up to her father as she had seen Gentle Hand do, and laid on him one of her little palms that touched him as softly as a snow-flake.

Whether there was a heavenly magnetism in Lilli's touch, as in that of Gentle Hand, or whether the act only surprised her father, I cannot tell, but Lord Hubert's anger died out on the

THE RUINED CASTLE.

See page 132.

instant. The dark blood that reddened his face went back to his heart and left it almost pale. He stood for a few moments like one who had been stunned by some unforeseen shock. Then bending to Lilli, he lifted her in his arms and held her closely against his breast.

"An angel has been long with us and we knew it not," he said as he laid Lilli in her mother's arms, passing her the child as a peace-offering.

A new joy and a new wonder were born in Lady Margaret's heart as she took the child, murmuring as she did so, "My own Gentle Hand!" A little while after she said, looking tenderly into her husband's face,

"Love is sweeter than wrath."

"What mean you?" he answered.

Lady Margaret lifted one of his hands, and kissing it, said again,

"Love is sweeter than wrath."

Then her meaning penetrated his thought, and a new light broke upon him.

"This is sweeter," he replied as he kissed her lips and cheeks with a fervor she had not known for many long years. Wildly, passionately, were the arms of Lady Margaret thrown about her husband's neck, and wildly, passionately, as in the far-off time when he had wooed and won her as his bride, did he return her loving caresses.

A new and better life was born in the heart of Lord Hubert from that moment. He felt the first movings of higher impulses and nobler desires.

"It is a great mystery," he said, speaking to Lady Margaret. "I cannot make it out."

"The good God has sent an angel into our house," answered Lady Margaret, "for only an angel could work so great a miracle. Once—it is long ago—I heard an old monk tell my father that a time would come when the lion would lie down with the lamb and a little child lead them, and that time must be coming now."

"It is all very wonderful," said Lord Hubert. "I cannot understand it. How can the light touch of a child's hand have such mighty power?"

"Good wishes have power in good acts," said Lady Margaret. "The will and the deed must go together, and it is the hand that does the good deed. Without the hand the will has no power."

Lord Hubert mused for a long time, then replied,

"A little light comes into my mind, and yet I see but dimly."

"See what?" inquired Lady Margaret.

"See that love may be sweeter than anger, kindness better than cruelty and good deeds nobler than violence."

"Oh, my husband!" exclaimed Lady Margaret in joyful surprise, laying her head on his bosom. A little while she was silent, then looking up into Lord Hubert's face, she asked,

"Who is noblest?"

He did not answer.

"God is noblest," said Lady Margaret, speaking low and reverently.

"Yes, noblest of all," replied Lord Hubert.

"No prince is so powerful," continued Lady Margaret.

"None," said her husband.

"Nor so honored and revered, and yet he is good to all, and kind even to the unthankful and the evil."

Lord Hubert answered only with a long-drawn sigh.

"To be truly great must we not be godlike?" asked Lady Margaret. "Princes and nobles are lifted above the people and have power over them—power for good and power for evil. They can be cruel and oppressive, filling the land with violence, or wise and good, covering it with peace. Which is best? Which is noblest?"

"To cover the land with peace, my gentle Margaret," answered Lord Hubert.

"Alas for the people that our prince is cruel, an evil man and full of violence!" said Lady Margaret, wondering within herself at her boldness of speech, for her husband was a great favorite with the prince, and had long been a man after his own heart.

Lord Hubert did not answer, and Lady Margaret began to fear that she had offended him, and to tremble in her heart lest his anger should break forth into passionate words or perhaps blows.

At this moment there came floating in upon them from afar off the clear, rich notes of a bugle.

"It is the prince," exclaimed Lord Hubert, starting up.

The countenance of Lady Margaret flushed and then grew pale, while a troubled look settled in her eyes.

"Is he coming to our castle?" she asked.

"Yes. There is to be a grand hunt in the forest. I had forgotten to tell you."

All now was hurry and excitement. Soon the prince, with nobles, servants and retainers, came dashing up to the castle gate, and entering, filled the courtyard with men and horses richly dressed and gay with plumes and trappings.

"Welcome, my prince!" was the greeting of Lord Hubert, who was proud of the honor conferred by this visit. Lady Margaret received him with courtesy and deference, yet with a coldness she was not able to conceal.

"My lady is not warm in her welcome," said the prince as he held the hand of Lady Margaret and looked boldly into her eyes. "How now? What does it mean?"

"Our prince is always welcome," answered Lady Margaret, and then asked,

"Is the young prince here?"

A handsome boy, tall and graceful, with large, proud-looking eyes, came forward and was warmly greeted by Lady Margaret, while the prince looked on half pleased and half annoyed.

And now all was changed in and around the castle. Its dull quiet gave way to sounds of mirth and revelry, to the tramping and clanging of horses' feet and the tumult of voices.

On the morning of the second day, that on which the grand hunt was to begin, there came a lady to the castle and asked to see the prince. When this was told him, he frowned heavily and denied the lady an audience. The truth was, the prince had had a quarrel with the lady's husband, a noble of the land,

and had violently seized his castle and given it to one of his favorites.

But the lady refused to leave the castle until she could get audience with her sovereign. Then the prince demanded of Lord Hubert that she should be thrust out and driven away. But Lord Hubert's heart had been touched by softer impulses, and he was seeing in a new and better light. His prince was wrong; he knew it and felt it. And so he ventured to speak in favor of the lady and her husband. At this the anger of the prince burned hotly, and there was danger of a sudden quarrel between him and Lord Hubert, for both were fierce and ungovernable when ruled by passion. Lady Margaret saw the rising storm, and vainly tried with gentle words to draw from the clouds of wrath that darkened their souls the fierce lightning that was just ready to leap out in consuming flames. A feud between her husband and the prince would, she knew, be bitter and terrible.

A few of the prince's favorites drew closer around him with dark and scowling faces, ready to draw their swords at a word, while as many of Lord Hubert's friends and retainers ranged themselves on his side.

At this a wild cry of fear and pain broke from the lips of Lady Margaret—a cry so full of anguish that it thrilled every heart, and made the fiercest pause on the threshold of strife. The echoes of this cry had scarcely died along the halls, and all was yet hushed in a deep silence, when the sound of little feet was heard coming swiftly up the great stairway, pattering like the fall of sudden rain, and a moment afterward a weird-

looking child, with large, tender, startled eyes, came hastily into the midst of this company of angry men, each of whom stood with his hand on his sword-hilt, ready for the shedding of blood.

"Oh, Gentle Hand!" exclaimed Lady Margaret, in a tone of such strange meaning that every one gazed at the child in wonder, except the prince, on whose countenance disgust mingled with cruel passion.

"Take her away!" he cried, with angry impatience, but scarcely had he spoken ere the child's hand was laid softly on one of his hands, and he stood very still, with swift changes of feeling trembling over his stern face and smoothing away its savage lines. As if a vision had suddenly come before him did he stand gazing down at the face upturned to his. And now, taking courage and hope, Lady Margaret spoke out in a sweet, firm voice, saying,

"Oh, my prince, love is sweeter than anger, kindness better than cruelty and good deeds nobler than violence!"

Those who heard this speech trembled as they looked at the prince, expecting an answer full of stormy wrath at language so bold and so rebuking. But strange to tell, the swift changes of his countenance went on as he stood with the child's hand still resting on one of his hands, until it lost every trace of sternness and evil passions, and became gentle almost as a loving woman's. Then he stooped, and lifting the child in his arms, said,

"What is your name?"

"I am Elsie," she answered, "but they call me Gentle Hand."

The prince looked at her small hands, stroking them with his own, and then laid one of them against his face, toying with it in a fond sort of way.

"It is a witch-child!" exclaimed a fierce noble, and drew his sword.

"A witch-child!" cried two or three others, beginning to crowd around the prince with angry scowls on their faces.

"An angel-child," answered Lady Margaret, speaking in deep, impressive tones. "Put up your swords, my lords. They are for the enemies of your prince, not for the messenger Heaven sends to him on an errand of mercy."

The hands of the fierce nobles dropped weakly to their sides, and they stood looking on with wonder-marked faces.

Then the lady who had come to ask justice pressed into the midst, and kneeling before the prince, caught one of his hands, and bowing her face upon it, cried,

"Oh, my prince, be just and merciful!"

A thing happened then that was so strange to the men of violence who stood around the prince that they were in amazement. When had he shown pity, or weakly consented to restitution? But now, bending with princely grace, he said to the lady,

"Arise, true wife of a brave and noble baron! Courage and devotion like yours shall have their reward. I restore castle and lands, rank and privileges, and let no man gainsay my word."

At this the Lady Margaret spoke out in clear tones, repeating the sentence uttered a little while before:

"Oh, my prince, love is sweeter than anger, kindness better than cruelty and good deeds nobler than violence!"

Then the prince turned to her and answered in a subdued voice,

"It hath been proven to me this day."

And now all the bold men of his retinue came closer to the prince, and one and another touched the child he still held in his arms, and to all a new life seemed to pass. The stern lines of their faces softened, their eyes had gentler meanings in them, and they spoke to each other in a language that was almost as new as a foreign tongue, so full was it of kindness and gentleness.

We said all the bold men of the prince's retinue, but there was one exception. The favorite to whom the prince had given the castle and lands he now restored was so full of rage and disappointment that he could scarcely restrain himself. Lord Hubert saw the pent-up anger of this man, and knew that he would resist his prince and stir up strife among the people. In the wild freedom of the chase for which they had assembled, all the bad passions now under control might leap into active life and kindle the fires of anger and hate, and when these are once kindled no man knoweth when they will be put out, nor when destruction and sorrow will cease.

And so Lord Hubert, while yet the child was in their midst, and while the heavenly sphere surrounding her yet penetrated the souls of all and softened and humanized their feelings, spoke out and said:

"Most honored prince, and you, brave nobles of the land, we

have fallen upon something new and strange. Hitherto, in bright swords and strong arms only have we seen the emblems of power. But to-day, in the touch of a little child, we find these to be as nothing. The anger of our hearts, which has been used to burn as a consuming fire, dies out at her breath. What does it mean? I think we have in our midst a messenger from the great God whose subjects we are, and who holds our lives every moment in his hands. Without him we are nothing. Let us be wise and prudent, and consider this thing.

"Most honored prince, and you, brave nobles of the land, we are met for a grand hunt in the forest—for a wild, fierce revel. Let us do another and a better thing. Let us hold a council to consider the welfare of our people. We are lifted above them, and have power over them for good or for evil. We can be cruel and oppressive, filling the land with violence, or wise and good, covering it with peace. Which is best? which is noblest?"

"To cover the land with peace!" spoke out Lady Margaret in the silence that followed.

Then the prince bowed to her graciously, and thus answered her husband:

"Let it be as my lords and barons shall say—a hunt or a council."

And in all that assemblage of bold men whose lives had been spent in acts of violence and wrong not one spoke against a council.

"It is well," answered the prince. "We will hold a council, and for a new thing under the sun. Not to consider how we

may further oppress and wrong our people, but how we may help them and do them good—not to decide questions of war and violence, but questions of peace and good-will."

Then the council met in order in the great hall of the castle, and continued for two days, and for most of the time Gentle Hand sat near the prince, and often, when some noble spoke up fiercely and the prince was moved by sudden anger, the hand of the child would rest softly upon him, and then the evil fire would go out in his eyes and the anger from his countenance.

The doings of this council were memorable in the land. A new and better day dawned upon the people. Courts of justice were established at which the humblest could bring his cause. The poor and the weak were cared for and protected. Roads were cut through dense forests and across mountains, and bridges built over impassable streams. Nobles vied with their prince and each other in giving benefits to the people. And they were all so much happier that even the men of violence wondered at and approved the change.

Gentle Hand went home with the prince to his royal palace. Thus it happened. After the second day of the council had closed, and while the prince, with nobles and retainers, was in the great banqueting-hall of the castle at dinner, two of the nobles, being heated with wine, got into a quarrel and drew their swords upon each other. It was in vain that the prince commanded them to put up their swords. They heeded him not, so fiercely burned their anger against each other.

"Where is Gentle Hand?" he asked of Lady Margaret, who

sat by his side. Already he had learned to reverence and trust in her wonderful power to subdue human passions.

Even as the prince asked for the child, she came swiftly into the banqueting-room, and went bravely up to the two angry men, laying a hand upon each and lifting her bright but soft and steady eyes to their faces. She did not speak a word, but looked at them steadily. Slowly the upraised swords went down, and arms that a moment before thrilled with a giant's strength were weak for evil deeds as a child's.

Then the prince rose up and said to Lord Hubert, before all the company,

"A gift so wonderful must be from Heaven, and for the good of all our people."

Lord Hubert bowed, but did not answer, for he knew what was in the prince's thought.

"Shall not the blessing lifted to your castle from a woodman's hut have a still wider sphere of influence, and go forth from our palace to the whole land?"

Even as the prince said this, Gentle Hand came and stood close to his side, and seeing her, he stooped down and lifted her tenderly and reverently in his arms.

"I will do no wrong," continued the prince, looking at Lord Hubert and Lady Margaret; "I will not take her without your consent; but for the good of our people I ask that she may dwell in the palace."

And all who were present urged warmly the prince's request.

Very hard was it for Lord Hubert and Lady Margaret to give

up the wonderful child, but they knew that if she dwelt with the prince in his palace it would be better for all the people, and that which was good for all would be good for each, whether he were noble or peasant.

And so Gentle Hand was taken from Lord Hubert's castle to the palace of the prince.

Now the princess was a proud and haughty woman, and her life with the prince was not a happy one. Often there was strife between them. When the prince returned bringing Gentle Hand with him, he had the child taken into the royal chamber, where his wife sat among her maidens, and placing her in the midst, he said:

"I have brought you a gift from Heaven, my gracious lady!"

Then, as the princess looked at the deformed child, with its pinched, unlovely face, she grew hot with anger, for she thought it an insult. But the prince said, with unwonted gentleness, as he lifted the child in his arms,

"I have spoken truly. It is a gift from Heaven."

And now one and another came round the prince curiously, and looked at the child, but the princess stood at a distance with a frowning brow. As one of the maidens leaned close to Gentle Hand the child touched her. All who were looking saw a quick motion of surprise in her countenance. Then she held out her hand and took the child and drew it toward her with a loving gesture.

"What mummery is this?" exclaimed the princess, in anger. "Give me the child!"

Almost rudely she caught Gentle Hand from her maiden's

arm. As she did so, all saw the anger die out of her face and a look of wonder spread over it. Then, as if her strength had departed, she sat down, still holding the child, and gazing upon it in mute surprise.

"What does it mean, my lord?" she said, looking up at the prince.

"A good gift from Heaven, sent as a blessing to us and to our people," answered the prince. "Her name is Gentle Hand, and there is more power in her softest touch than in the arm of our bravest knight."

At this moment the young prince, who had returned with his father, dashed into the chamber in a furious passion, followed by a younger brother, with whom he had already quarreled.

Quick as thought Gentle Hand slipped from the arms of the princess and was at the side of the young prince. A soft touch of her small hand, and the raging boy stood motionless as a statue, all the dark passion going out of his face. Then he stooped and kissed her with a brother's loving kiss, saying as he did so,

"I am glad you are going to live in the palace."

Such wondering looks as sat upon the faces of the princess and her maidens were never seen before.

And now a stranger thing happened. As they all stood looking at the thin, pinched, weird face of Gentle Hand, its straight lines seemed to bend in curves of beauty and the soft flesh to take a rounder fullness on lips and cheeks. The great humps on her back and breast seemed to grow smaller, and her neck and head to lift themselves more gracefully above her

shoulders. All signs of homeliness faded out of her countenance, and to the charmed eyes that now gazed intently upon her she looked beautiful.

From this day forth the marvelous change went on. Softer and rounder grew the lines of beauty in her face, and smaller and smaller the unsightly hump on her shoulders and back, until at last she stood straight and tall, as beautiful in form and features as the loveliest princess in all the land.

All hearts drew toward her, and as by her heavenly power she ruled all hearts, she became through that power the ruler and dispenser of good to all the people, though they knew it not, nor saw the sign of her power, but gave honor and praise and gratitude to their prince, who governed so justly and with such a wise and generous regard for their welfare.

As years passed on, and Gentle Hand grew toward womanhood, she grew more and more lovely.

The fame of her beauty and goodness spread far and near, and princes and nobles came to the palace to ask for her hand. But Eric, the young prince, was deeply in love with her, and to him she gave her heart, and they were married.

There was never a grander or a happier wedding than the wedding of Gentle Hand and the young Prince Eric, and there was never a happier people than the people of that land when, on the death of Eric's father, the prince and Gentle Hand came to rule over them.

THE SQUIRREL HUNT.

THE SQUIRREL HUNT.

A GRAY squirrel was busy one pleasant autumn day in gathering nuts and storing them up for winter in the hollow of an old tree. A farmer was chopping wood not far off, and his axe rang loudly through the forest, but this sound did not trouble our squirrel, for he had heard it often before, and knew that it meant no harm for him.

But there came other sounds on the air—children's voices and the barking of a dog. At this the squirrel started in alarm. The children saw him and gave a loud shout, and the two dogs that were with them went tearing after the frightened animal, making the woods ring with their fierce yelpings.

The dogs were so close upon the poor squirrel when he saw them that escape seemed almost impossible. But close by there lay a hollow log, and into this he darted just as one of the dogs was about seizing him.

"We've got you now, old fellow!" cried the children as the dogs sprang into the hollow of the tree to seize the squirrel. But Squirrel was not so easily caught. He was smaller than the dogs, and could go in a great deal farther to keep out of

their reach. The dogs barked and yelped and growled, but it was of no use. Squirrel was safe from their teeth.

And now the farmer came up with his axe, and seeing how it was, said to the children and dogs:

"Just keep off a minute and I'll get him."

And so he raised his sharp axe and began cutting down into the log.

What was that which struck him a smart tap on his head? Only a nut, dropped by Mr. Squirrel from the tree above him where he sat looking down far away from danger. Squirrel had been in that log many a time before, and knew just how to get out of it at the other end. He had whisked through like a flash, and was springing up into the tree at the very moment when the dogs were looking for him in the dark hollow of the log.

The farmer cut away with his axe, not heeding the nut that fell upon his head, but when he had laid the log open from end to end no squirrel was to be found.

You are glad Squirrel got away. I can see it, children, in the pity and gladness that beam from your eyes.

NEDDY HARRIS.

"WE'VE had a good time, Tony, old fellow! haven't we?" said Neddy Harris, who was beginning to feel tired with his half day's ramble in the woods and fields. And as he said this he sat down on a hill-side that overlooked a pleasant valley, and from which he could see the clusters of elms and maples that stood around his home.

Tony replied to his young master by a short bark and a knowing twist of his waggish little head, which was as near as he could come to saying, "A first-rate time, Master Neddy!" And then he seated himself also, and took a survey of the country spread out beneath them. He looked very wise and very sharp, as though he had charge of everything, and was on the watch to see that nothing went wrong. What kind of fancies played through his doggish brain I cannot tell, but I think they had something to do with the supper that awaited his arrival home.

"A grand good time!" added the boy as his tired limbs felt the comfort of a soft resting-place on the green turf. "And now," he continued, "as father says we should always do, I'll

just go back and think over what I've done this holiday afternoon, and if I forgot myself in anything, and went wrong, it will be best for me to know it, so that I can do better next time."

So Neddy turned his thought backward, and read out of the book of his memory what had been written down there by an invisible pen during the past few hours. Now, this book of

memory is a very wonderful book. Did you ever think of it? Every instant of time in which we are awake, and often when asleep, an invisible penman is writing in it every one of our thoughts and actions, good or bad, and we have no power to blot out the writing.

"I'm sorry about that poor squirrel," said Neddy. "He never did me any harm. What a beautiful little creature he was, with his bright black eyes and shiny skin!"

And the boy's face grew sad, as well it might, for he had pelted this squirrel with stones from tree to tree, and at last knocked him to the ground, when Tony, with one grip of his sharp teeth, made an end of him.

"I don't blame Tony," said the boy. "He's only a dog, and doesn't know any better. But it was so cruel in me! Now, if I live a hundred years, I'll never harm another squirrel. God made these frisky little fellows, and they've just as much right to live as I have."

Neddy felt better about the squirrel after this good resolution, which he meant to keep.

"That was curious about the spider," he went on, trying to push all thoughts of the dead squirrel from his mind. Let me tell you about this spider. In the corner of a fence Neddy saw a large circular spider's web, shaped like a funnel, down in the centre of which was a hole. As he stood looking at the delicate thing, finer than any woven silk, a fly struck against it and got his feet tangled, so that he could not escape. Instantly a great black spider ran out of the hole at the bottom of the web, and seizing the poor fly, dragged him out of sight and made his dinner off him.

"Try what you can do with this, you old black land-pirate!" exclaimed Neddy, who pitied the fly, although he had just helped his dog Tony to kill a harmless squirrel, and all for sport. But, as we have seen, he was sorry for that cruel act,

and we only mention it here to show how quick we are tc blame others and forget our own wrong-doings. As Neddy spoke, he dropped a piece of dry bark about the size of his thumb nail into the web, and it slipped down and covered the hole through which the spider had to come for his prey. Instantly the piece of bark was pushed up by the spider, who came out of his den and ran around on the slender cords of his web in a troubled kind of way. Then he tried to get back into his hidden chamber, but the piece of bark covered the entrance like a shut door. And now Mr. Spider was in a terrible flurry. He ran wildly up one side of his web and down another; then he tugged at the piece of bark, trying to drag it out, but its rough edges took hold of the fine silken threads and tore them.

"You'll catch no more flies in that web, old chap!" said Neddy as he stood watching the spider.

But Neddy was mistaken. Spider did not belong to the give-up class. If the thing could not be done in one way, it might in another. He did not reason about things like human beings, but then he had instinct, as it is called, and that teaches animals how to get their food, how to build their houses or make their nests, and how to meet the dangers and difficulties that overtake them in life. After sitting still for a little while, spider went to work again, and this time in a surprising way. He cut a circle close around the piece of bark as neatly as you could have done it with a pair of sharp scissors, and, lo! it dropped to the ground, leaving a hole in the web about the size of a ten-cent piece.

"Rather hard on the web, Mr. Land-pirate!" said Neddy, laughing. "Flies can go through there as well as chips." When he called the spider a land-pirate, Neddy was wrong. He was no more a pirate—that is, one who robs and murders—than is the woodpecker and swallow, for they feed on worms and insects. The spider was just as blameless in his work of catching and eating flies as was Neddy's white bantam when she went off into the fields after grasshoppers.

But Neddy's laugh at the spider was soon cut short. The most difficult part of his work was done when he got rid of the piece of bark. As soon as that was out of his way, he began moving backward and forward over the hole he had cut in the web, just as if he were a weaver's shuttle, and in about ten minutes it was covered with gauzy lacework finer than ever was worn by a queen.

"I'll give it up, old fellow!" exclaimed Neddy, taking a long breath as he saw the work completed. "This just beats me out!" Spider crept down into his den again to wait for another fly, and Neddy, whistling to Tony, went on his way pleased and wondering.

"I'm glad I didn't take the eggs out of that hanging bird's-nest," Neddy said to himself as he sat thinking over what he had done during his afternoon's holiday. "I wanted to so badly, but then I thought of the dear little birds that would be hatched if I left them in the nest. An egg is a pretty thing, but what is an egg to a bird? all alive and so beautiful! And I'm glad I put up Farmer Glenn's bars that somebody left down. He might have had ever so much trouble about his

cattle. I wasn't going to do it at first, for I said, 'It's none of my business.' But then I remembered hearing father say once that it was everybody's business to be kind and thoughtful of their neighbors, and to see that no harm came to them that we could help. And father's always right about these things."

So Neddy talked on with himself, until he had gone over all he had done during his afternoon in the woods and fields. For the stone he threw at a frog he was sorry. "It didn't hit him, and I'm glad of that," he said, by way of comfort. For the pail of water he drew from the well for a poor old woman who looked too weak to turn the wheel, and for the lamb he had taken back to the field from which it had strayed, he felt well satisfied with himself.

"It's the good we do that makes us happy, father says, and the wrong we do that makes us unhappy. And now I understand just what he means. If it had not been for killing that dear little squirrel I'd go home feeling all right, but that worries me. Now, Tony!" And he sprang from the ground, and ran swiftly down the hill, as if trying to flee away from all thoughts of the dead squirrel.

Neddy Harris was one of your well-meaning boys who wished to do right, and if he found himself wrong, he was sorry for it, and tried to do better next time.

Play is a help, not a hindrance, to study. But then play and study must each have its own time. The trouble with some boys is that they wish to play in study hours.

Neddy Harris was as fond of play as any one, and when he

did play, it was in earnest. He took his full measure of enjoyment. And he was able to do this because his mind was free from all thought about lessons. He never dropped his ball in the midst of his play, as I have seen some boys do, and exclaim,

"Oh dear! I haven't got one word of my lessons yet, and I shall be kept in again to-morrow if I miss a line," and then scamper off home to the drudgery instead of the pleasure of study.

"You don't call study a pleasure!" I hear a little reader say, in a tone of surprise.

Why not? Isn't eating a pleasure?

"Eating!" You look amazed, my little friend, as if I were half in jest. But I am not.

"What has eating to do with studying?" you ask, looking serious, because you see that I am in earnest. Did you never hear of food for the mind?

"Oh yes," you say, in ready answer.

Well, what is food for the mind? Now you look just a trifle puzzled. But it's all as plain as day, if you will think for a moment. There's your little sister. A year ago she could just stand alone; now she runs about and goes up and down stairs almost as easily as you can. How does it happen that she has grown larger and stronger? All is easily explained. She has had food to eat, and this food has been turned into blood and flesh and bone, making her bigger and stronger day by day.

But something else has happened, and I want to hear your

explanation of that. A year ago her mind was so feeble that she only understood the meaning of a few words; now she talks quite plainly, and thinks as well as talks. In fact, her mind has grown as well as her body. Now, what made her mind grow? Not the food that went into her mouth. That couldn't have done it. Dogs and cats eat, but their minds don't grow. They never become wise like men and women. Her mind grew from what she learned. That is the explanation. The knowledge of things was her mental food, and to know or learn was to eat this mental food. And I think you will say that she often took as much delight in eating the food that made her mind grow as she did in eating the food that made her body grow. Don't you remember how eagerly she listened when you told her about the birds building nests and laying little speckled eggs in them, out of which came dear little birds not so big as young chickens? You were feeding her mind then, and she enjoyed the taste of the food you gave her as much as she ever enjoyed her bread and milk.

"I never thought of that!" you say, a pleasant light falling over your face.

There are a great many interesting things passing in us and around us all the while of which we can know nothing unless we stop to think. Let me ask you another question. Have you never felt as much pleasure in reading about the wonderful things of nature as your little sister felt when you told her of the birds, their eggs and their little ones?

"Oh yes," you say; "hundreds of times."

A book is your delight. Why? Because it gives food to

your mind, and for no other reason. But study! Ah, it is the task-work that you don't like. No one's fault but your own, I'm thinking, that study has become task-work. You might make it a pleasure, if you would.

But in my desire to help you to see that there ought to be as much pleasure in learning as in eating, I have kept my young friend, Neddy Harris, out of sight, and I must now go back to him again. As I have told you before, he liked play as well as study, and there was not a boy in his class who enjoyed a game at ball or cricket, or a half-day's ramble in the woods, better than he. He let his heart, as we say, go into whatever he did, and that is the true secret of success or enjoyment.

Neddy had finished all his lessons for the next day, except the one on Physiology. He was studying that, and really enjoying the information it gave him about the way in which the blood enters the heart on the right side, and passes from one chamber to another by valves that open and shut, going into the lungs and again back into the heart, and then by heart-throbs sent leaping in pulsations all over the body, when the door of his room was thrown open, and Harry Brown, a classmate, cried out,

"Come, Neddy! we're going to have a game of base ball over in Mr. Bloomer's field. Hurry! The boys are making it up now."

"I can't until I've got my Physiology lesson," Neddy answered, speaking firmly.

"Faugh! Let Physiology go to the dogs!" answered Harry Brown. "I haven't got mine yet, nor my Latin lesson, either, as to that; so come along."

"Study first and play afterward," answered Neddy. "That's my rule, and it's never good to break rules, father says. It's always sure to get us into trouble."

"You can get this lesson just as well in the evening," urged Harry.

"No, I can't. To-night's our reading-night. Father reads aloud three evenings in the week, and I wouldn't miss the part of the book we're going to have to-night for half a dozen games of base ball, much as I like to play."

"Oh, well! Stick to your lesson, then! A fellow can't turn you any more than he can turn the wind," said Harry, rather

impatiently. "I'll have my fun, at any rate, and you can dig and delve at your Physiology till doomsday if you like. I hope you may have a good time over it."

And bounding out of the room, Harry Brown ran off to join his playmates in a game of ball.

When deeply interested in anything, we scarcely think of time. The minutes glide by unnoticed. It was nearly an hour after his schoolmate left when Neddy's father opened the door of the library and found him sitting over his book. The lesson was just finished, and Neddy lifted a face that beamed with satisfaction. It had been no mere task-work with him, this hour's study, but a season of refreshment for his mind. He had learned something about his own body that filled him with wonder and delight. Now, when he laid his hand over his heart and felt its steady throb, he understood something of what was going on in the hidden chambers of life.

"I am going to drive over to Milford this afternoon, my son," said Mr. Harris. "If you have all your lessons, I shall be glad of your company."

"I'm just through," answered Neddy, shutting his book, "and I should like to go over to Milford above all things. Will you stay there long enough for me to see the glass-works?"

"I shall be there at least an hour."

"I'm so glad! Yes, thank you, I'll go along." And Neddy ran up to his room to make a few needed changes in his dress.

I am very sure that Harry Brown did not enjoy his game at base ball half so much as Neddy enjoyed his hour among the glass-blowers, for Neddy's mind was not burdened with the

thought of unlearned lessons, but free to enter with delight into whatever was new, strange and interesting. How different all would have been if, yielding to Harry, he had broken his rule of "study first and play afterward"! The game would not have been half enjoyed for thinking of the lesson yet to be learned, and the lesson learned in the evening wouldn't have been half enjoyed, because while studying it his father would be reading the pleasant book he could not hear. And to make all worse would be the thought that he had been a weak and foolish boy.

On the next day all of his lessons were said perfectly, but Harry Brown had learned his so badly that he was kept in during the half-hour's recess.

Sadly poor Harry gazed from the schoolhouse window as the boys played on the green. Neddy was with them, one of the happiest of the number. There was not the smallest burden on his free spirit. Study-hours had been spent in study, and now he ran and jumped and shouted with the rest, no shadow of care or regret dropping down from a passing cloud of thought to dim his enjoyment.

"Where are you going?" asked Mr. Harris of Neddy, who came out of the house with a basket on his arm one Saturday morning. There was no school on that day.

"To pick up scraps of iron and nails down by the old mill," replied Neddy.

"What are you going to do with scraps of iron and nails?" said Mr. Harris.

"Sell them. They're worth two cents a pound."

"Ah, indeed. But what put that idea into your head, my son?"

"I'm saving up money to buy a line and reel. Will Martin told me that he picked up enough old iron in a few weeks to sell for three dollars. So I'm going to try what I can do. I found two old horseshoes and an iron bolt yesterday that weigh nearly two pounds. I look closely at the ground as I walk along, and I don't let even an old nail escape me."

A smile lit up the face of Mr. Harris for a moment, and then he looked grave.

"And so," he said, "for the sake of a few old nails and horseshoes, you turn your eyes away from the pleasant trees and fields, from the river and the sky, from all the beauty of nature. You do not read a single sentence in the great book about which we have talked, giving up all for a penny's worth of old iron."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Neddy as he let the basket drop from his hand, "you have such a way of putting things, as our teacher says! I thought it was all right, and that when you knew about it you would be pleased. I'm sure it's better to pick up old bits of iron and have them worked over again than to let them lie useless on the roadside."

"Of course it is, provided always that the person doing this little bit of useful work does not neglect something of more importance. If one can be better employed than in gathering up old iron, then it is waste time to engage in this sort of business."

Neddy's eyes fell to the ground. He saw that his father was right, and yet all was not clear to him.

"I might be better employed in reading than in searching

about at the old mill for scraps of iron," he said, "but then it's a holiday, and you think it best for me to be out of doors as much as possible. If I can get exercise and old iron at the

same time, what's the harm? I want money to buy a line and reel, and I don't see any other way to get it."

"So we have it all in a nutshell, as they say," remarked Mr. Harris. "And now let us examine it carefully. We should always try, in earning money, to give the best service of which we are capable. Any of the poor little boys and girls whose parents live in the shanties across the meadows can pick up old iron and nails as well as you, but there is not one of them able to render the higher service in your power to give. They could not add up a column of figures, nor make out a bill, nor teach a child to write and cipher. Mr. Josslyn the storekeeper would not trust one of them to ride over to Milford to buy things for him, or to pay or collect a bill. Yet you could do any of these things."

"Oh, father," said Neddy, growing excited, "do you think that Mr. Josslyn would like to have me go over to Milford for him?"

"I shouldn't wonder. His young man is sick, and I've no doubt he would be glad of a little help of some kind, for Saturday is usually a busy day with him. And I'm sure that two or three hours spent in helping Mr. Josslyn, if you wish to employ a part of the time in earning a little money, would be a great deal better than picking up old iron, and give you a large return of pennies, as well as satisfaction of mind."

"I'll run right over and see Mr. Josslyn," said Neddy.

"What will you say to him?" asked his father.

"Oh, let me see." And Neddy thought for a few moments. "Why, I'll just say it as it is: 'Mr. Josslyn, I want to earn some

money to buy a line and reel, and if you want any help, I'll come and work for you part of the day.' "

"Yes, I think that will do. It's the simple truth," replied his father.

And so it happened that Mr. Josslyn wanted some one that he could trust to ride over to Milford and transact several items of business. Two persons living there owed him small bills which they had promised to settle on this very day; besides, he wanted to order some glass and several other things that could be had at Milford.

He knew Neddy very well, and was just as glad to get the service offered as Neddy was to render it.

It took our young friend just three hours to ride over to Milford and back. He did not look down all the way for old nails and horseshoes, but enjoyed the sight of woods and fields and sparkling water, the songs and sportings of birds, and, best of all, his own thoughts about what he saw.

"Thank you, my little man," said the storekeeper, when Neddy returned with the money he had collected. "You have done me a real service." And he paid him a dollar and a half.

"Oh, that's too much," exclaimed Neddy as he looked at the money.

"If you are satisfied, I am," said Mr. Josslyn. "And what is more, I will be glad to see you on next Saturday."

"Better than old iron," said Neddy as he showed the money to his father.

"And there's something better still," remarked Mr. Harris.

YOUNG SOLDIER.

See page 141

"What?" Neddy looked up at his father.

"You are wiser as well as richer."

"Wiser? How?"

"You have learned some things about the difference in work—how some kinds are more useful than others."

"Oh yes. Picking up old iron may be well enough for boys that live in the shanties across the meadow, but it would be wasting time for me. I can do better and higher kinds of work."

"Better and higher because it is more useful," said Mr. Harris. "In the mere work of gathering up lost or cast away things no one is helped. There is no double good. A few pennies or dollars are earned by the person who does this work, but the work itself helps no one. How different when we help another in what we do, as in your case to-day! You may, if you will, have as much pleasure in thinking of the service rendered Mr. Josslyn as of the money you earned."

On the next Saturday the storekeeper was very glad to see Neddy again, who helped him for a few hours, and received a dollar for his service. He had money enough now to buy the line and reel he had set his heart on, and the following Saturday started off alone for a day in the woods among the trout streams.

He came home several hours before his father expected to see him, without rod or reel, or the basket of speckled trout he had promised.

"What's the matter, my son?" asked Mr. Harris. "Where's your fishing-tackle? and what brought you home so early?"

"I'll just tell you all about it," said Neddy. "The fact is, I've changed my mind about fishing."

"Have you, indeed? Why, how did this come about?"

"I'm going to tell you. I felt as light and happy as a bird when I started off this morning. At first I thought of Ellis River, but afterward changed my mind and went to Mountain Brook. It was a good hour's walk. How lovely the water seemed! So clear and still in the quiet places; so bright and sparkling when it rushed between or leaped over rocks. All was beautiful, and I felt so happy. I looked down into the water, and remembered your saying that it was like truth to the mind, satisfying thirst and cleansing from impurity. I saw the little minnows gliding about; the white pebbles at the bottom; the tiny caverns and the smooth sandy places. A bird came down to drink close by where I stood, dipped its bill into the water a few times, and then with a chirrup flew off among the trees. For a little while I forgot what I had come for. Then I unwound my reel, fixed my line, and made ready for the sport I had so long promised myself.

"The very first time my fly touched the water there was a leap at one of the hooks, and then a fish struggled at the line. I can't tell you just how I felt, it came so suddenly. But before I could land him he broke away. For more than half an hour after that I threw my line, sometimes going up stream and sometimes down, but without a bite. At last, as I dropped my hooks lightly over a rapid piece of water, a small trout caught at one of them and fastened himself. I drew him easily to the shore, and as I removed the hook from his mouth the blood

ran over my hand. I could not help a shiver as I saw it. And yet I've fished a great many times.

"Poor little trout! He trembled and struggled in my hand, and gasped for the water that to him was like air. He was slender and beautifully speckled, and as I looked at him, pity came into my heart. So I just put him back into the water and let him go. I couldn't help it, father. Oh, I was so glad when I saw him dart away!"

Neddy paused, and looked up into his father's face.

"And what then?" asked Mr. Harris.

"I sat down to think," replied Neddy. "Or, I might better say, the thoughts that came into my mind made me sit down."

"What kind of thoughts were they?"

"A new kind of thoughts to me, but they were right thoughts: I'm pretty sure of that. It seemed as if somebody were talking inside of me. The first thought was a question, and came in these very words: 'Is it right to take pleasure in giving pain?' Then this question followed: 'Has God given us so few things to enjoy that we must kill the fish and shoot the birds for sport?' 'But we eat the fish,' I answered to myself. 'Were you so hungry that you had to come out here to get food?' was asked. What could I say to that but 'No'? I had only come for pleasure, and I was to find that in torturing and killing the happy trout sporting and feeding in the pure water where God had placed them. Turn it over in my mind as I would, I was not able to see it any differently. If I had been hungry and in need of food, or if I had been poor and obliged to fish for a living, it would have been another case.

But to kill for sport is certainly not godlike and angel-like, as I've heard you say.

"So you see, father, I'm cured of my fishing mania, as you called it the other day. If I were to tell the boys at school, they'd laugh at me, but I can't help that."

"There is no need of your talking about it," said Mr. Harris.

"But if I am right, father, why shouldn't I talk about it?"

"Very true, my son."

"There is nothing in it to be ashamed of," added Neddy. "Boys talk about their robbing birds' nests, throwing stones at frogs, geese and pigs, and doing other mean and cowardly things, and because the older boys brag over their cruel acts, the smaller ones follow their example. Laughing doesn't hurt anybody. I guess I can stand a little of it. If I don't say what I think about a thing, as to whether it is right or wrong, what use are my thoughts to any but myself? And you say that nobody in this world has a right to live for himself alone."

"Spoken like a brave boy, as you are, Neddy!" said Mr. Harris, with so pleased a tone in his voice that it made the lad's heart glow. "As to the sport of fishing, you will find plenty to differ with you, and among them good and true men. But be sure of this, my son, that every voice which, speaking to your inward ear, warns you against cruelty to any living thing, is the voice of an angel, and that if you hearken obediently to that voice, you will come under purer influences, and be better able to meet the temptations that assail every one in the

journey of life. At your age I was very fond of gunning and fishing, and I have often spent days in the wood with either my rod or fowling piece. But once—I had grown to be fifteen years old—I shot a blue jay, breaking its wing. It fell from the tree where, but an instant before, it had been so happy in its innocent bird-life, and fluttered in pain on the ground only a few yards from where I stood. As I picked it up, and saw the bleeding and broken wing, and felt the blood on my hand, a thrill of pity for the poor suffering bird ran through my heart. Could a load of buckshot, shattering my shoulders to pieces, put me in greater agony than I had caused this harmless jay? Shame reddened my cheeks.

"Poor bird! I put him out of his misery, and went home, feeling very sober. From that day, my son, I have never killed a bird nor caught a fish. When I needed recreation or pleasure, I found plenty of ways open to me quite as satisfactory and health-giving as shooting and fishing, and so will you. But you have not said what became of your rod and line."

"I sold them," replied Neddy. "Wasn't it curious? As I came out of the woods over by Mr. Reed's, a man met me, and said,

"'That's a nice outfit, my lad: What'll you take for it?'

"'Three dollars,' I answered, without stopping to think.

"'It's a bargain,' said he, taking out his pocket-book, and handing over three dollars.

"'You are perfectly satisfied?' he added.

"'Oh yes, perfectly,' I replied, 'for I don't mean to fish any more.'

"'Why not?' he asked.

"'Because,' said I, 'the sport is too cruel for me.'

"If you could have seen how he opened his eyes, showing the whites all around them, and could have heard the long, low whistle he gave, you would have laughed, as I did.

"'Good for you!' he said, patting me on the shoulder, and then he went his way and I went mine."

ONE OF BABY'S TEACHERS.

"HE'S the sweetest thing alive," said Nelly as she stooped over the cradle and kissed her baby brother, "and I do love him so! What makes him so sweet?"

"His purity and innocence. There is nothing in all this world so pure and innocent as a baby," answered Nelly's mother.

"Wasn't God very good to let us have him?" asked the child.

"Oh yes, and how thankful we should be!"

"I am thankful, mamma. Last night, when I was saying my prayers, I said 'Thank you, Lord, for baby,' and I said it again this morning. Do you think he heard me?"

"Yes, for he is everywhere, and hears and sees everything."

"Then he knows how much I love baby?"

"Yes; he knows all our thoughts and feelings."

"All of our bad thoughts as well as our good ones?"

"Yes, dear. He knows us better than we know ourselves."

"I don't have any bad thoughts when I'm with baby," said Nelly. "And if I feel naughty, it's all gone when he comes in. Oh, he's so sweet! sweet! sweet!" And she bent over the cradle again, almost smothering the baby with kisses.

"And he's so good and pure," added the mother. "Now, shall I tell you how we can best show our thankfulness to God for sending us the baby?"

Nelly looked up earnestly, and waited to hear.

"We must do all we can to keep him sweet, and pure, and good. We must be kind and gentle in all our ways with him. And as he grows older, we must be careful what we say or do, for we will be his teachers. What he hears us say, he will say, and what he sees us do, he will do. Just think, darling, of his getting angry at the table, as you did this morning, and throwing his piece of bread on the floor."

"Don't talk about that, mamma," said Nelly, her face getting sober and tears coming into her eyes.

"It is not to make you feel badly, dear, that I speak of it," answered Nelly's mother. "But as you are one of baby's

teachers, I must put you on your guard. How did he learn to kiss his hand?"

"I kissed my hand to him ever so many times, and at last he could do it. And I taught him to squint up his eyes in such a funny way. See!" Nelly shut her eyes, and the baby, laughing and crowing, did the same.

"See, Nelly dear, how fast he is beginning to learn from you. You have taught him to kiss his hand and squint up his eyes, and do ever so many cunning little things, but don't, if you love him and want the good Lord who sent him to us that we might help him to live a good life in this world, and become an angel in heaven, to leave him to our care, teach him by word, or look, or example, anything that is wrong. If he hears you speak angrily, or sees you do naughty things, he will do the same, for the little ones have everything to learn, and do just what they see us do. And so, darling, if baby does not keep his sweetness and innocence while a baby, it will be our fault."

"I wish I could always be good," said Nelly, "but I'm afraid there is something bad in me." And a shadow came over her little face.

"There is something bad in us all," Nelly's mother replied. "But the Lord knows about it a great deal better than we do, and he is always trying to help us to do good. Now, one of the ways in which he helps us is to lead us to help others. If we see that the bad in us hurts others as well as ourselves—as the bad in you, if you let it come out, would hurt baby—then if we will try to conquer this bad, and, while trying, ask the

Lord to help us, he will do so, and put good into our hearts in place of the bad."

"Oh, mother, will he?" A light like sunshine fell over Nelly's face.

"He will, darling."

"I'm so glad!" She spoke the words half to herself. Then taking baby's hand, softer than any velvet, she laid it against her cheek, and murmured, "I'll try to be good for your sake, sweetest!"

After that no mother could have asked for a better child than Nelly. "I am one of baby's teachers," she would often say to herself, when tempted to do wrong, and then, for baby's sake, she would resist the wrong, often asking God to help her. And he did help her, as he helps every one who, earnestly trying to do right, prays to him for strength, for he wants us to be good that we may be happy and live with him for ever in heaven, and so, the moment we try to do right, he, the All-powerful, comes quickly to our aid.

EASTER EGGS.

"SISTER GRACE!"

"What do you want?" Sister Grace did not lift her eyes from the gay embroidery over which her fingers were swiftly moving.

"To-morrow's Easter."

"Can't you tell me something I don't know?" was the reply—not unkindly spoken, but without any interest in the sister's voice.

"Look at me, Grace, won't you?"

"There! I'm looking at you." And Grace Bond dropped her hands in her lap with a slightly annoyed gesture and fixed her eyes on the child's face.

"To-morrow's Easter."

"I've heard that before. Anything else?"

"Yes: I want you to dye me some eggs."

"Dye you some eggs!"

"Yes. All the little girls are going to have them. Jennie May and Lucy White told me about the beauties they had last year, and what lovely ones their mother was going to dye for them to-day."

"I must beg to be excused, Fannie," said Grace, coldly.

The light and eagerness went out of the child's face, and her eyes grew wet with tears.

"Don't be silly!" Grace spoke a little harshly. "What does a big girl like you want with Easter eggs?"

"I'm no bigger than Jennie May or Lucy White, and they're going to have them," replied Fannie.

"I can't help it if they are." Grace spoke with some petulance in her voice. "I haven't any time for such nonsense."

Now, Fannie had set her heart on the Easter eggs, and her disappointment was so great at her sister's refusal that she could not control her feelings, but burst out crying, at which Grace, being much annoyed, scolded her sharply. This did not help the matter any. Grief gave way to anger, and Fannie

talked back to Grace in a very unsisterly way. Both of them were made unhappy.

Thinking to find employment for Fannie, and so divert her thoughts, Grace handed her a piece of worsted work and said,

"Put this flower in for me, won't you? You did the last one nicely."

"No, I won't!" Yes, these were her very words. "If you can't dye me the eggs, I'll not work your flowers."

"Oh," said Grace, "if you're going to keep such bad company, I can't stay." And she went from the room, leaving Fannie alone.

For a good while Fannie sat crying from anger and disappointment. Then, as she grew calm, the thought of what her sister said as she went out, "If you're going to keep such bad company," came into her mind. She knew very well to what company her sister referred. Anger, ill-nature, fretfulness, were her companions now, and they were making her wretched.

Gradually, as she sat alone thinking, a change came over her feelings. "I'm sorry I talked so to Grace," she said, "even if she wouldn't dye me the Easter eggs. Oh dear!"— and she drew a long sigh—"some little girls have kind sisters that do everything for them, but Grace thinks it a trouble to do even the littlest thing for me."

Even as Fannie said this she remembered the beautiful party-dress that Grace made for her only the week before, and how she sat up late at night so as to be sure to have it ready. And then she thought of a dozen kind and self-denying acts of her sister, all done for good.

"I'm sorry," she spoke aloud. The bad company in which Grace left her had gone, and in their place were repentance, kindness, love.

She took up the strip of worsted that Grace had placed in her lap, and unrolling it, commenced working in the flower, and was soon so interested in what she was doing that she scarcely noticed the passage of time.

Grace did not feel very happy when she went from the room leaving Fannie alone. She had not regarded her little sister with the kindness and consideration that were her due. The Easter eggs were a thing of no account to her, but to the child who had set her heart on them they were a great deal.

Now, it happened that next door to the pleasant home in which Grace Bond lived was a poor German family—a man and his wife and two children. The woman had been sick, and Grace had gone in two or three times during the week to see her. It was an hour, perhaps, after leaving Fannie alone, that the thought of this woman came into her mind.

"I'll go and see how she is," said Grace, and putting something over her head, she went to the next door and knocked.

"Come in!" cried a pleasant voice, and Grace pushed open the door.

What a surprise! The group that met her gaze was a picture in itself, and very pleasant to look upon—a picture with a lesson that went down into her heart.

Sitting on a low chair was the German mother. On the floor was a white napkin, over which gayly-colored Easter eggs had been spread to cool, and she was now lifting these,

one by one, into a dish on her lap. In front of her were the two children, a boy and a girl, looking so pleased and happy that the very sight of their faces made the heart of Grace grow warmer.

"Easter eggs?" she said, with a smile, as she came forward into the room.

"Yes; they please Ludwig and Bertha," was the woman's answer. "And I make them happy when I can."

How lovingly the children looked up into her worn and patient face!

A thought of her unhappy sister now flashed through the mind of Grace, and there came to her the image of the child sitting alone and in tears—a painful contrast to the scene before her. Self-rebuke and self-condemnation followed quickly.

"Oh, these are beautiful!" she said, stooping to the floor and taking up one of the eggs. "How charmingly you have painted them!"

"Won't you take some for your little sister? Bertha and Ludwig will be glad to share them, I know." And the mother looked to her children for approval.

"She shall have two of mine," said Bertha, quickly. "And two of mine," cried Ludwig.

"Oh no; I can't rob you after that fashion," answered Grace. "But if you will let me have four of these beauties—they are beauties—I will send you in a dozen not dyed. Fannie will be so pleased to get them."

"Take them all," said the woman. "I will dye more for the children."

But Grace said, "No; four will be enough for Fannie."

On returning home, Grace hurried to the room where, an hour before, she had left her little sister angry and in tears. Her heart had a troubled beat as she pushed open the door and went in. All was silent. By the table, with her face buried in her arms, sat Fannie fast asleep. The strip of worsted work, with the flower completed, lay on the floor, as if it had just dropped from her hand.

"Fannie dear!" Grace spoke in a tender, loving voice. The child moved but did not answer, for sleep lay heavy on her senses.

"Fannie!"

"Oh yes! What is it?" answered the child, dreamily.

"Fannie dear!" Grace called again.

"Oh! Easter eggs? No, I haven't any; and I wanted them so badly!"

Still dreaming, but she was wide awake a moment afterward, sitting up looking at Grace and then at the beautifully painted eggs that were held before her wondering eyes.

"It is so good in you, sister dear!" she exclaimed. "Thank you a thousand times!" And springing up, she threw her arms about Grace's neck, hugging and kissing her in a heart-gush of love.

"I will try and be more thoughtful of my little sister hereafter," said Grace to herself; and speaking aloud, with her arms still about the neck of her sister, Fannie said: "I wasn't naughty long, Grace; and I've worked the flower for you, and you are a dear, dear good sister as ever was!"

HOW BOBBY RYAN CAME NEAR BEING DROWNED.

"NEVER make an enemy even of a dog," said I to Bobby Ryan as I caught at his raised hand and tried to prevent him from throwing a stick at our neighbor Howard's great Newfoundland. But my words and effort were too late. Over the fence flew the stick, and whack on Dandy's nose it fell. Now, Dandy, a great, powerful fellow, was very good-natured, but this proved a little too much for him. He sprang up with an angry growl, and bounding over the fence as if he had been as light as a bird, caught Bobby Ryan by the arm and held him tightly enough to let his teeth be felt.

"Dandy! Dandy!" I cried, in momentary alarm, "let go. Don't bite him."

The dog lifted his dark brown angry eyes to mine with a look of intelligence, and I understood what they said: "I only want to frighten the young rascal."

And Bobby was frightened. Dandy held him for a little while, growling savagely, though there was a great deal of make-believe in the growl, and then tossing the arm away,

leaped back over the fence and laid himself down by his kennel.

"You're a very foolish boy, Bobby Ryan," said I, "to pick a quarrel with such a splendid old fellow as that. Suppose you were to fall into the lake some day, and Dandy happened to be near, and suppose he should remember your bad treatment and refuse to go in after you?"

"Wouldn't care," replied Bobby. "I can swim."

Now, it happened only a week afterward that Bobby was out on the lake in company with an older boy, and that in some way their boat was upset in deep water not far from the shore, and it also happened that Mr. Howard and his dog Dandy were near by and saw the two boys struggling in the water.

Quick as thought Dandy sprang into the lake and swam rapidly toward Bobby, but, strange to say, after getting close to the lad, he turned and went toward the larger boy, who was struggling in the water and keeping his head above the surface with difficulty. Seizing him, Dandy brought him safely to the shore. He then turned and looked toward Bobby, his young tormentor. He had a good many old grudges against him, and for some moments seemed hesitating whether to save him or let him drown.

"Quick, Dandy!" cried his master, pointing to poor Bobby, who was trying his best to keep afloat. He was not the brave swimmer he had thought himself.

At this the noble old dog bounded again into the water and brought Bobby to land. He did not seem to have much heart in his work, however, for he dropped the boy as soon as he

reached the shore, and walked away with a stately, indifferent air.

But Bobby, grateful for his rescue and repenting of his former unkindness, made up with Dandy on that very day, and they were ever afterward fast friends. He came very near losing his life through unkindness to a dog, and the lesson it gave him will not soon be forgotten.

BE A GOOD GIRL.

"BE a good girl, Dolly! Don't do anything naughty while I'm gone, and be sure to get your lesson."

And Katy lifted her finger and shook it at Dolly as she opened the door to leave the room.

Now, these were almost the very words Katy's mother had said to her only a little while before.

And what do you think was in Katy's mind when she said this to her Dolly? I will tell you. She had been playing with Fido and her Dolly for a good while, as happy as she could be, when all at once she thought of the basket filled with nice cake she had seen that morning in her mamma's closet, and as soon as she thought of the cake she began to want a piece.

But mamma had told her never to go to this closet to help herself, so she tried not to think about the cake, but still the thought would come. At last she said to herself, "I'll just get a tiny little piece"—as if it wasn't as wrong to take a little piece as a big one.

So off Katy started, after charging her Dolly to be a good girl while she was gone. As she opened the closet door she thought she heard her mother's voice. She stopped to listen.

"BE A GOOD GIRL."

"Be a good girl, Katy!" It seemed as if the words were spoken aloud, so distinctly did they fall on her ears. "Don't do anything naughty while I'm gone." Just what she had said to Dolly.

A strange feeling came over little Katy. She shut the closet door softly, looked all about the room and listened for her mother's steps, but she was alone.

"Be a good girl, Katy!" Again the words seemed spoken aloud.

Katy stood wondering; then she said softly to herself, as a light came into her face, "I guess it's one of the angels mamma told me about that won't let bad spirits make us naughty if they can help it. I was going to be naughty, but I won't. I'll not touch the cake, because mamma said I mustn't."

And the little girl went back to her Dolly, and catching it up in her arms, kissed it fondly, saying, as she danced about the room, "Dear Dolly was a good little girl, and didn't do anything naughty while its mamma was gone!"

THE SNOW STORM.

"OH dear! I'm so disappointed!"

Harvey sat by the window looking out dreamily at the fast-falling snow.

Now, a boy ten years old is not often put out of humor by a snow storm, for the snow brings frolic and fun. But it happened that this one came just in the wrong time—at least so Harvey thought, for it kept him from making a promised visit to his cousins, who lived a mile or two away. The snow was already deep and still falling, and his mother would not hear to his going off alone.

"My dear boy," she said, "you might get lost in the snow and be frozen to death."

But Harvey wasn't afraid, and would have taken all the risks if his mother had said the word. This she could not do, and so the boy had to stay at home, much against his will.

Instead of putting on his great coat and warm mittens, as most little boys would have done, and having a good time out of doors, where the beautiful snow was drifting about in feathery flakes and covering the earth with a carpet of the purest white, he sat moping at a window, saying every now and then to himself, in a miserable voice:

"Oh dear! I'm so disappointed!"

About midday the snow ceased falling and the sun came out bright and strong. What a lustre and sparkle was on everything! How strange and wonderful in its new robe of dazzling whiteness was every object on which the vision rested!

As Harvey looked from the window he felt the charm of a scene so lovely. The shadows of disappointment passed away and his cheerfulness returned.

"It is so beautiful!" he said, looking up into his mother's face.

"It is good as well as beautiful," answered his mother.

"What is the snow good for?" asked Harvey.

"It is good for the broad fields in which the farmer sows his grain. This snow storm, which made you angry because it came in the way of a little pleasure, has covered the grain-

fields as with a soft blanket, protecting the seed sown there, and making sure the summer harvests."

"Oh, I didn't know that!" answered Harvey. "But I was so disappointed!"

"And, like a great many older people," said his mother, "refused the pleasure that was at your door, and sat down gloomily to sigh for something afar off. But the storm is over

now, and I think, if you are dressed up warmly, you might go over to your cousin's. The snow is not very deep."

Harvey clapped his hands in high glee, and danced about the room for joy.

In a few minutes he had on his warm overcoat, his cap and his mittens, and with a light basket in his hand started off.

"You see, darling," said his mother as she kissed him at the door, "that you have wasted a whole morning and been unhappy for nothing. Because God was spreading this covering of snow over the fields that he might give bread to the hungry you complained and were miserable, instead of being thankful for his goodness, and waiting for the pleasure you had looked for until the storm was over. You have the pleasure now, and it is your own fault that it comes after pain."

GOD'S ACRE.

THE children gathered around their father with expectant faces as he untied a broad thin parcel.

"What is it?" asked one of them, more eager than the rest to grasp the coming pleasure.

A moment afterward, and there was held up to our admiring gaze the beautiful chromo, "God's Acre." For a little while we were all silent as we looked at the two children out in the wintry snow, and felt the sadness that rested on one of their faces.

"Poor, dear children!" said I, first to break the silence. I had thrown my arm around Katie, and now drew her tightly to my side.

"Where are they going?" asked Eddie. "What are they doing out in the snow?"

"Going to lay a wreath upon their mother's grave," said I, with a tender sadness in my voice that I could not repress.

"Oh! is their mother dead?" returned the child, his voice catching the sadness of my own.

"Yes, dear. They are poor motherless little girls, and they have gone to the graveyard on a dreary winter day to put an offering of love upon her grave."

GOD'S ACRE.

"Why do they call the picture God's Acre?" asked one of the children.

"It is another name for a graveyard," replied their father. "Longfellow has a poem beginning—

> 'I like that ancient Saxon phrase which calls
> The burial-ground God Acre! It is just:
> It consecrates each grave within its walls
> And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.'"

"I'm so sorry for them," said Katie, crowding closely against me and laying her curly head on my bosom. Then she put her arms about my neck and kissed me, and as I looked down into her face I saw that her eyes were swimming in tears. My own heart was too full to speak, and I only drew my arm more tightly around her, thanking God in my heart that my little ones still had their mother to love and care for them.

THE WHITE ROSE.

A WHITE rose that grew far up on a trellis felt very lonely, and sighed to be down in the garden where the children were at play.

"I am of no use away up here," she said. "Nobody sees me, and when I breathe out my sweet odors, the wind bears them off among the tree-tops, and they are lost."

But even as she sighed her complaints a soft hand reached down from a window and took her gently from the stem that bore her, and she heard a voice say:

"How pure and sweet!—pure as my patient Lily."

Then the hand that held her tenderly bore her to an inner chamber, where a sick child lay upon a bed.

"This beautiful white rose," said the voice which had sounded so sweetly, "came up from the garden and grew close by the window. It has breathed the purest air and drunk the warmest sunshine. Its heart is full of sweetness."

And the hand held her close to the sick child, who was refreshed by her beauty and fragrance.

Then the rose quivered with delight, and breathing out her very heart upon the air, filled the chamber with a rich perfume.

"I am content," she said, a little while afterward, as she lay on the pillow beside the sick child, her soft white leaves touching the cheek as soft and white as themselves.

THE NEW SCHOLAR.

"THIS is a boy's school," said the kind old teacher as he put the rod he held in his hand behind him. "We don't take dogs."

There was a smile in his pleasant eyes.

"Ponto would come along, you see; he's so fond of Josie."

"Yes, ma'am, I've no doubt of it, and the lambs and kittens too. But we only take boys."

Josie had seen the rod which the teacher was trying to keep out of view, and it frightened him. So he drew back and caught hold of his mother's dress, while Ponto, a little scared, like his master, but on the alert, smelled suspiciously at the teacher's trowsers.

"He's a good boy," said Josie's mother, lifting the cap from his pure white brow, "and won't, I am sure, give you any trouble."

But the rod was too much for Josie. He kept his eyes upon the arm that held it, and bent round to get sight of the terrible instrument.

"It isn't for good little boys like you"—the teacher smiled and looked kindly at the lad—"but for bad boys and dogs."

And he looked at Ponto, lifting his hand and making believe he was going to strike. The dog started back in alarm and ran out of doors, Josie following, and in the next instant both were seen scampering down the road and on their way home. It was all in vain that Josie's mother called him; he neither stopped nor turned, but kept on as fast as his legs would carry him, and did not stop until he and Ponto were safe at home.

"So much," said the teacher, a little severely, to Josie's mother, "for letting him bring his dog along. You ought to have known better."

"And so much," answered Josie's mother, a flash of anger in her eyes, "for keeping an instrument of torture in your hand to frighten little children. You ought to know better."

The mother and teacher stood looking at each other with severe faces for some moments. Then a change came over that of the kind old man. It grew mild and gentle.

"You are right," he said, with a tender regret in his tones. "I ought to have known better, and I thank you for telling me the truth. Bring your little boy to-morrow, and I promise you there will be no rod visible to frighten him. But be sure," he added, a smile lighting up his face, "to leave Ponto at home."

THE SISTERS.

"I'M sorry, but one of you will have to stay at home," said the mother. "Hannah's father is sick, and I promised her that she should go to see him, and I cannot take the care of Eddie all day."

Of course she could not. You had only to look into her pale face and on her thin, weak body to know that.

Her two little girls, Fannie and Alice, were standing before her when she said this. She saw their countenances fall.

"I wish it were not so," the mother added, feebly, "but I would be in bed sick before the day was half over if I were left alone with Eddie. Some one has to be after him all the time."

Fannie pouted and scowled, I am sorry to say. Alice looked sober and disappointed. They went from their mother's room without speaking. When so far away that her voice could not be heard, Fannie said, in a sharp, resolute tone, from which all kind feeling had died out:

"*I'm* not going to stay at home, Miss Alice! You can make your mind up to that."

Alice did not reply, but sat down quietly. Her disappoint-

ment was keen, for some little girls in the neighborhood had made up a small pic-nic party, and were going to have a pleasant day in the woods.

"It will be as mother says," she spoke out, after thinking for a while.

"I'm the oldest and have the best right to go," answered Fannie, selfishly. "And what's more, I'm going;" and she commenced putting on her things.

A few tears crept into the eyes of Alice. It would fall upon her to stay at home; she saw that. Fannie was selfish and strong willed, and unless positively ordered by her mother to remain at home and let her sister go, would grasp as her own the pleasure to which Alice had an equal right with herself. If the decision were referred to her mother, a contention would spring up, and then Fannie would speak and act in a way to cause her distress of mind.

"If mother were to make Fannie stay at home," Alice said, in her thought, "she would pout, and fling, and act so ugly that there'd be no comfort with her, and mother isn't strong enough to bear it."

The tender love that Alice held in her heart for both her mother and dear little two-year-old Eddie was all-prevailing, and soon turned her thoughts away from the pic-nic and its promised delights to the pleasures and loving duties of home.

"I'm going to stay," she said, coming back into her mother's room with a bright face and cheerful voice.

"Are you, dear?" It was all she said, but in her tone and looks there was a precious heart-reward for Alice.

"He's been so sweet all day!" said Alice, coming in where her mother sat by a window, with the cool airs of the late afternoon fanning her wasted cheeks. She had a weary look.

"And you have been sweet too, my darling!" answered the mother, in a very tender voice, as she laid her hand on Alice's head. "I don't know what I should have done without you. It has been one of my weak days. But you look tired, dear,"

she added. "Sit down in that easy-chair and rest yourself. Come, Eddie."

And she held out her hands for the child, but he clambered into Alice's lap and laid his cunning little head against her bosom. Both were tired—loving sister and sweet pet brother. It seemed hardly a minute before they were asleep, and as the

mother, with eyes that were fast growing dim, looked at their tranquil faces and quiet forms, she thanked the good Father in heaven for a gift so precious and beautiful.

Bang! went the door, startling the mother from peaceful thoughts and arousing Alice from the light slumber into which she had fallen. In came Fannie, all in disorder, and threw herself into a chair, looking the picture of unhappiness.

"Have you had a pleasant time?" asked the mother, speaking with a kind interest in her voice.

"I've had a horrid time!" answered Fannie, flinging out the word angrily. "I never saw such a mean set of girls in my life. They wouldn't do anything I wanted to do, nor go anywhere I wanted to go."

"That was bad," said the mother. "And I suppose you wouldn't do anything they wanted to do, nor go anywhere they wanted to go."

Fannie did not reply.

"How was it, my child?" urged the mother.

"Hadn't I as much right to have my way about things as any of them?" demanded Fannie. "There was that Kate Lewis. I can't bear her! If she said, 'Let us do this,' or, 'Let us do that,' every one agreed in a minute."

"You with the rest," said the mother.

"Indeed, then, and I didn't!" replied Fannie, impatiently. "Kate Lewis can't lead me about by the nose, as she does other girls. I have a mind of my own."

"Perhaps," answered her mother, seriously, "you would have

come nearer to the truth, my child, if you had said a self-will of your own. I find, from your account of things, that you wanted everything your own way, and, because the rest wouldn't give up to you, made yourself disagreeable and unhappy, and so lost all the pleasure of the day. I'm afraid you were not in just the best state of mind for enjoyment when you left this morning."

This was too much for Fannie, already feeling so miserable, and she broke out into a fit of sobbing and crying.

In what different states of mind were the two girls at the close of this day! Alice, awakened from a brief but refreshing sleep by the entrance of Fannie, sat, with tranquil heart and peaceful face, looking at her unhappy sister, who had selfishly claimed the day for pleasure, not caring how wearily it might pass for her, and pitied her miserable condition, while Fannie cried from very shame and wretchedness.

Dear little readers, need I ask any of you, even the youngest, what made all this difference? Already you have come to know, through some painful as well as pleasant experiences, that happiness waits not on any selfish demand, but creeps lovingly into every heart which, forgetful of its own ease, or comfort, or pleasure, seeks the comfort and blessing of others.

Do not forget this, dear children. Keep it always in mind, and it will not only save you many unhappy hours, but put warm floods of sunshine and joy into your hearts.

KATIE'S RIDE DOWN HILL.

TAKE good care of her, Frankie."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And be sure not to upset her in the snow."

"Wouldn't that be fun?" laughed Katie, a merry light sparkling in her blue eyes.

"Not if you struck on your nose or got a bump on your head," said mamma as she wrapped Katie up warmly.

"Get on, now! There! Hold fast, and away we go!" shouted Frankie, and off he started with little Katie on his sled, pulling her easily over the snow.

What a pretty sight it was!—Katie, a soft, warm bundle, on the sled, looking so happy, and Frankie, full of life, prancing along with her like a spirited horse.

Away they went, down the lane and across an old field to a hillside where the boys of the village came to coast. This hill was steep, and there was a mill-race at the bottom, now frozen over and covered to the depth of several feet with drifted snow.

"You get off now," said Frankie, "and let me go down the hill."

So Katie got off the sled, and Frankie drew it to the edge of the hill.

"Now see me go!" he cried to Katie, and he took his seat on the sled. A moment after he was moving off, and soon went gliding down the hill as swiftly as the wind. Katie almost held her breath as she watched her brother, and when she saw him safely at the bottom clapped her hands with delight.

"Get on with me," said Frankie as he came dragging his sled to the hilltop, his face glowing with excitement. He had forgotten his mother's parting words: "Take good care of her, Frankie."

"Oh, I'm afraid," answered Katie.

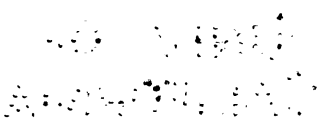
"Get on! There's no danger! I'm not afraid," urged her brother; "you don't know how nice it is. See! There goes Maggie Lewis. She's not afraid. Come! That's a dear little sister. It's splendid fun. Just get on the sled and try it. I know you will like it."

So urged and persuaded, Katie, with her little heart in her mouth, as the saying is, got on the sled, sitting right behind her brother and clasping both arms around him, while he held the cord that was fastened to his sled.

"Oh, I'm afraid!" said Katie, in a low, timid voice, as the sled began moving, and her eyes went down the steep hill before her.

"No danger!" answered Frankie; yet, even as he said this, he felt less assured, for the hill looked steeper than before, and the burden of Katie on his sled and the clasp of her arms took

THE RIDE DOWN HILL.



away the free play of his muscles and that confidence so needful in the swift descent.

Away they went, their speed increasing every moment, until they reached a place where the hill pitched down at a sharp angle, and beyond which the coaster had no power to stop himself, but must go on swiftly to the bottom, where, by firmly bracing his feet, he could check his flight in time to keep free of the mill-race.

"Oh dear!" cried Katie as she looked down the hill; "I'm so frightened!"

"No danger," said Frankie, trying to speak bravely. "Keep right still and hold on."

Away they flew, swifter and swifter. It seemed to Katie as if they were falling from a window. She lost her breath in the rush of the passing air, and knew nothing more until she felt herself bounding from the sled. In the next moment she was buried deep in the soft bed of snow that filled the mill-race, and as safe from harm as if she had tumbled into a bank of feathers.

"Oh, Katie, Katie! Are you hurt?" cried Frankie, in great fear, as he sprang up and shook the snow-flakes from his great coat, just as you have seen a water-dog shake the drops from his shaggy sides.

Half a dozen boys who had seen the flight down the hill and the leap into the mill-race came running to the rescue, and soon pulled little Katie out of the snow-drift. She was as white as a little lamb. Clothes, hair and face were all covered with the soft down of winter.

"I won't tell mother anything about it," said the dear child, in a voice out of which the fear had not yet gone, as Frankie brushed the snow from her hair and shook it from her coat.

"But I will," answered Frankie.

"And get a good scolding," said one of the boys. "What's the use? I wouldn't tell her!"

"My mother never scolds," returned Frankie; "she only talks easy and good, as if she loved me. I tell her everything."

And then dragging his sled to the top of the hill while the boys carried Katie, he seated his little sister again and drew her home. By the time they arrived, Katie's fright was over, and she had a grand little story to tell about her coasting down the hill and tumble in the snow-drift.

"Oh, I wish you could have seen her when the boys pulled her out!" said Frankie. "She looked just like a dear little lamb—white all over."

Frankie's mother did not scold him—as he said, she never scolded—but she talked to him about the care he should feel for his sister.

"You are older," she said, "and know where danger is better than she does. You are stronger, and can do and brave more than she can. Never forget this, and never forget that, as her older brother, your love and care should not for a moment fail. Let to-day's lesson, my son, make you more than ever thoughtful and tender of our dear little lamb."

And ever after Frankie was as careful and tender of her as his mother could desire.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING.

ND what a glad time it will be for the little ones! In thousands and thousands of homes, when breaks the Christmas morning, there will be sweet surprises like that in the picture, and hearts made happy by love-gifts.

Christmas is coming! You are waiting for it, dear children—waiting and wondering what gifts it will bring.

Shall I tell you, in this waiting-time, a Christmas story? I know one; it is about a little girl when she was only nine years old. Her name was Felice, and she lived with her old grandmother in a small cottage that stood alone on the roadside, nearly a mile away from the village.

One day, just a week before Christmas, a man came riding by. He was closely wrapped in a heavy cloak, for the air was cold and snow lay deep on the ground. His face had an unhappy look, and he rode along with his head bent forward and drawn down among the fur linings of his cloak.

As this horseman passed the cottage he looked carelessly at its single small window, and then suddenly drew his rein and stopped. What did he see? Nothing very wonderful. Only

two tiny cedar trees not more than twelve inches high, each with gay ornaments like flowers on its slender branches, purple, and yellow, and scarlet.

He drew his rein and stopped. For a little while he sat gazing at the tiny Christmas trees, the hard, unhappy lines going slowly out of his face and a more pleasant look coming in their place. Then he got down from his horse and went into the poor little cottage.

Felice was all alone, for her grandmother had gone to a neighbor's to get some wool to spin, but she was not afraid when the tall man came in, for though he had a cold, almost stern face, there was something kind in the dark eyes that looked into hers.

"All alone, my little maiden?" he said as he looked around the room.

"Yes, sir," answered Felice, and the man thought he had never heard a sweeter voice. "Granny's gone for wool."

"Aren't you afraid to stay here all by yourself?" asked the man.

"Afraid!" There was a slight tone of wonder in the child's voice.

"Yes; it's so still and lonely."

"Granny says, if I think good thoughts, angels will come close to me, though I can't see them, and granny knows. I'm not afraid of them, sir."

Felice looked up into the man's face and saw it soften and change. He could not bear her steady gaze, and so turned a little from her.

"Won't you sit down, sir?" said Felice, and the stranger took one of the old wooden chairs in the room and sat down.

"So you are going to keep Christmas?" The man looked at the two tiny trees in the window, and as he did so his eyes rested on two or three more standing in a corner, but not dressed like the others. "But what do you want with so many trees?"

"Oh, sir, they're for some of the poor children down in the village who won't have any of their own," replied Felice.

The man seemed to catch his breath. A warm color came suddenly into his face. He turned and gazed for some moments, with a look of strange surprise, at Felice. How pure, and sweet, and innocent her face was! Not a line of self-approval there; nothing to show that a thought of anything but making the poor village children happy had ever crossed her mind.

"Did you dress them?" asked the man, rising and going to the window.

"Yes, sir, all myself. Granny has to spin."

He lifted one of the pots, in which a tiny tree was planted, and looked at it closely. The little rosettes of bright cloth were neatly cut and tastefully arranged about the tree, while here and there hung a yellow immortelle or purple amaranth.

He stood very still for a while, and then drew a long sigh.

"Is your granny old?" he asked as he came back from the window.

"Oh yes, sir, she's very old. Her hair is white as snow."

"And so poor that she has to spin?"

"Yes, sir; all day long."

"How old are you?"

"Nine," she answered.

"What is your name?"

"Felice."

The man sighed again. After a moment or two he drew himself up, and with a tone of reproof in his voice, said,

"I think it would be better to help your poor old grandmother than to waste time in making Christmas trees for idle children who might dress their own."

For a moment or two the man's words seemed to stun the child. She moved away from him, and her eyes had a frightened look. But this soon passed off, and the peace of a good conscience rested on her dear young face.

"You don't know, or you wouldn't say that," she answered, looking at him steadily.

He felt the rebuke of her eyes and words. The two gazed steadily at each other, but the man's eyes were first to turn away. A feeling that was almost reverence for the little maiden came into his heart. She seemed to him more like an angel than a child.

"Are there many poor children in the village?" he asked.

"Oh yes, sir! a great many." What a light, what a hopeful interest, came into her face!

"Do you dress trees for them all?" inquired the stranger.

"Oh no, sir!"

"Why not?"

A shadow fell upon the child's face.

"Why not?" The man repeated his question.

CHRISTMAS MORNING.

"We are poor, granny and I," the little maiden answered, "and it takes money to buy the pots and bright cloth. We do all we can."

The stranger caught his breath again like one a little scared. Then he bent down, and lifting the child gently, kissed her and went away.

That evening, just as the sun was going down, a man brought three boxes and left them at the cottage.

"Who sent them?" asked the grandmother.

But the man only said, "They are for you. That is all I know," and went away.

When they opened the boxes, what surprise and gladness filled their hearts! In one of them were a hundred little flower-pots; in another, pieces of gay-colored cloth, gold and silver paper, spangles and gilt balls; and in the other meal and bread, meat and dried fruit, and a purse containing a small sum of money.

Poor old granny and little Felice cried for very gladness of heart.

What a busy time they had for the next five or six days, making little trees out of cedar and pine branches, and dressing them up in gay Christmas attire for the poor village children!

"He'll come again, granny, I'm sure of it," Felice said, every day, as they worked at their pleasant task.

But she was mistaken. The stranger did not come, and Felice, who often went to the gate in front of the cottage to gaze up and down the road, looked for him in vain.

At last it was the day before Christmas, and the floor of their cottage was like a flower garden. Every one of the hundred pots had its tiny Christmas tree that stood up bravely in fine attire.

"What shall we do with them all?" asked Felice's grandmother as she stood looking at the beautiful display.

"They are for the poor village children," answered Felice.

"Oh yes! But there are so many. How shall we get them into the village? It would take us all day to carry them in, and it's bitter cold. See! the snow is beginning to fall. I don't know what we shall do."

And the old white-haired grandmother's face was troubled.

As they talked in their perplexity, they heard outside the sound of wheels, and looking from the window, saw the man who had brought the three boxes. He came bustling in, rubbing his hands to warm them, and saying, as he entered,

"Are the Christmas trees ready?"

There was no need of an answer, for he had but to look down upon the floor that was as gay and beautiful as a flower-bed.

"Ay, ay!" he said, replying to his own question. And then, without a word more, he commenced gathering them up and carrying them out. It was not long before every Christmas tree was in the man's wagon. After stowing away the last armful, the man jumped in and drove off, without so much as saying "good-bye" to granny and Felice, who had stood looking on in a bewildered, helpless kind of way, wondering at what they saw.

All day the snow fell, and Christmas eve closed in dark and stormy upon the inmates of the little cottage. But the fire burned cheerily on their hearth and their souls were full of peace, for, though they should not see it, they were sure that a hundred hearts would be made glad through the work of their hands. Sweet was their sleep that night, and in dreams they heard angel voices singing, "Peace on earth, good-will to men."

What a glorious Christmas morning was that which broke upon the world when next night drew aside her dusky curtains! Up into the clear blue sky the sun arose, filling the air with sparkles like diamond dust, and giving to the snowy carpet that covered the earth the sheen of fretted silver.

"What is that, my child?" asked the grandmother. Their breakfast was over and she was at her wheel, just beginning to spin.

Felice looked from the window, and then called back in a hurried voice:

"A carriage! And there's a lady getting out!"

Too much surprised to move, Felice and her grandmother stood still until the door opened and a stately woman came in, accompanied by a servant bearing a large bundle. But with all her stateliness, the woman had a kind face and her eyes were full of a tender interest.

"And this is little Felice?" she said, smiling down upon the wondering child. Then she stooped and kissed her.

"As you remembered his poor children at Christmas-time, so our good Father in heaven has put it into our hearts to

remember you," the lady added, kissing Felice a second time.

Then she turned to the old grandmother, who was trembling with joy and wonder, and taking her thin brown hand, that was shriveled by age and hardened by labor, kissed her on the forehead, saying, as she did so, in a low, serious voice, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

For a little while all stood in reverent silence. Then the lady said, in a cheery voice, her whole manner changing:

"A merry Christmas, my good Dame Helder! And a merry Christmas, Felice! There's going to be a gay time among the village children, and you are both wanted."

At this the servant opened the bundle she carried, and the lady took from it a handsome new gown, warm underclothing and a woollen cloak for the grandmother, and one of the sweetest little dresses for Felice you ever saw, with plenty of other things to match.

What a busy, bustling, bewildering time there was in the cottage for the next half hour! Both Felice and her grandmother thought themselves dreaming all the while, and expected every moment to wake up.

As soon as they were all ready, and so changed that they would not have known themselves, they were taken into the carriage and driven away.

If their surprise was great at all this, it was doubled when, after riding for an hour, they found themselves entering the wide court-yard of a castle.

As the carriage drew up amid a group that were gathered around the castle door, the tall, dark man who had stopped at Dame Helder's cottage came out quickly, and lifting Felice in his arms, kissed her before all the people, and then carried her into the castle.

"I'm sure it's all a dream," said Felice, in her heart, as she lay with shut eyes in the strong arms that held her very tenderly.

All at once a sound of many voices—children's voices—broke upon her ears. She opened her eyes. Was she in Fairyland? It must be so, she thought, for surely nothing on earth could be half so gay and beautiful. She was in a large hall hung round with banners and curtains, and decked with wreaths and festoons of evergreens. From the centre of the hall rose a great Christmas tree whose top touched the ceiling, and all its branches were laden with toys, and fruit, and rich confections.

Around the tree, at the bottom, a narrow stand had been placed, and on this, sweeping in a circle of beauty, stood the hundred little trees that Felice and her grandmother had dressed for the village children.

The man—he was lord of the castle, and the people in the village were his tenants—held Felice high up in his strong arms, so that she could see all the beautiful things in the hall and the happy children dancing around the Christmas tree. When she saw the circle of little trees, she could not keep the tears from rolling over her cheeks.

Then the lord of the castle set her in a crimson chair that

stood on a platform at the upper end of the hall, and called to the children, who came running gayly down the floor. But when they saw a child beautifully dressed sitting in the crimson chair, they grew silent and pressed closely around her.

"It is Felice!" suddenly cried out one of the children.

"Oh, it's our good Felice!" said another, clapping his hands.

And "Felice!" "Felice!" Felice!" ran through the hall from a hundred glad voices.

But all this was too much for the excited child. The red flush began to fade out of her sweet face, and in its stead there came the pallor of faintness. At this moment the lady who had brought her from the cottage—she was wife to the lord of the castle—entered the great hall, and seeing how white Felice had grown, caught her up in her arms and carried her away to her own chamber.

Shall I tell you what happened after this? Felice did not go down again to the hall, where the children of the village spent the happiest Christmas they had ever known, and at evening went away, each taking some present for the poor father and mother at home. She had grown faint from excitement, and had to be kept quiet all day.

What happened next? Oh, well, this is what happened. The lord and lady of the castle had no children, and had grown selfish and careless of their poor tenants in the village. But now that the hand of this strangely sweet and gentle child had opened a door in their hearts, and taught them a lesson of good deeds, love went out toward her so strongly that they could not send her back from the castle. Every day that she

remained there she grew lovelier in their eyes and dearer to their hearts, and at last one said to the other,

"Let her be to us as our own child."

And it was answered,

"Let it be so."

And it was so.

DON'T CRY OVER SPILLED MILK.

OH, pussy!" cried Herbert in a voice of anger and dismay as the blockhouse he was building fell in sudden ruin. The playful cat had rubbed against his mimic castle, and tower and wall went rattling down upon the floor, a hopeless wreck.

In blind passion, Herbert took up one of his blocks and threw it fiercely at pussy. Happily, it passed over her and did no harm. His hand was reaching for another block when his little sister Hetty sprang toward the cat and caught her up, saying,

"No, no, no! You sha'n't hurt pussy. She didn't mean to do it."

Herbert's passion, which had blazed up with so quick a flame, went out as quickly, and sitting down upon the floor, he covered his face with his hands and cried.

"What a baby!" said Joe, his elder brother, who was reading on the sofa. "Crying over spilled milk does no good. Build it up again."

"No, I won't," replied Herbert, and went on crying.

Joe looked down upon his book again. Hetty held the cat closely in her arms, and Herbert went on crying in a miserable way.

"What's all the trouble here?" exclaimed papa as he opened the door and came in.

"Pussy just rubbed against Herbert's castle and it fell down," answered Hetty, "but she didn't mean to do it; she didn't know it would fall, did she, papa?"

"Why, no!" said papa. "And is that all the trouble? Herbert!"

The little boy got up from the floor.

"Come;" and papa held out his arms.

Herbert came slowly, his lips pouting, his eyes full of tears, and stood by his father.

"There's a better and pleasanter way than this, my boy," said papa, "and if you had taken that way, your heart would have been light already. I should have heard you singing instead of crying over your blocks. Shall I show you that way?"

Herbert nodded his little head, swallowed back his sobs and wiped the tears from his eyelashes.

Papa sat down on the floor by the ruined castle, and Herbert sat down beside him, the lost smiles already beginning to play about his lips and to dance in his eyes.

"Don't let pussy come here," he cried, in a warning voice, to Hetty, as his father began laying out the foundation for a new castle.

"Pussy isn't going to," answered Hetty, hugging the cat closely in her arms.

Soon Herbert was as much interested in castle-building as he had been a little while before, and as he laid block upon

block, the pleasant feelings that were coming into his heart flowed out in low music from his lips. He began to sing over his work. All his trouble was gone.

"This is a great deal better than crying, isn't it?" said papa.

"Crying for what?" The little fellow's delight in his work of building a new castle was so great that he had already forgotten his grief of a few minutes before.

"Because pussy knocked your castle over."

"Oh!" A shadow flitted across his face, but was gone in a moment, and he went on building as eagerly as ever.

"I told him not to cry over spilled milk," said Joe, looking down from the sofa.

"I wonder if you didn't cry," retorted Herbert, "when your kite-string broke."

"Losing a kite's another thing," answered Joe, a little dashed at this. "The kite was gone for ever, but your blocks were as good as before, and you only had to build again."

"I don't see," spoke up papa, "that crying was of any more use in your case than in Herbert's. Sticks and paper are easily found, and you had only to go to work and make another kite."

Joe looked down at his book and went on reading. By this time the castle was finished.

"It's ever so much nicer than the one pussy knocked down," said Hetty.

And so thought Herbert, who walked around the handsome building and looked at it proudly from all sides.

"If pussy knocks that down, I'll—"

"Build it up again," said papa, finishing the sentence for his little boy.

"But, papa, she mustn't knock my castle down. I can't have it," spoke out Herbert, knitting his forehead.

"You must watch her, then, and see that she doesn't rub against your buildings and push them over. Little boys, as well as grown-up people, have to be often on guard. If you go into the street, you have to look out for the carriages, so as not to get run over, and you have to keep out of people's way. In the house, if you go heedlessly about, you will be very apt to run against some one. I have seen a careless child dash suddenly into a room just as a servant was about leaving it with a tray of dishes in her hands. A crash of china and loss to her parents followed."

"That was me," piped out Hetty; "wasn't it?"

"Yes, I believe it was, and I hope it will never happen again."

"I guess it won't," said Hetty, with just a little pride at being the heroine of this adventure showing itself in her voice. "But wasn't it a smash-up?"

Papa tried to look very serious, but there were twitches in the corners of his mouth that the children's sharp eyes saw. To keep from laughing right out, he jumped up from the floor and went out of the room, saying as he did so,

"I don't want any more of this crying over spilled milk, as Joe says. If your castles get knocked down, go to work and build them up again."

TIRED OF READING.

"TWENTY pages more," said Adelaide White, turning to the back of the book to see how many leaves remained.

Then she gaped, stretched herself wearily, and looked out of the window for a minute or two. After this she bent down over her book again and went on reading. Her mother, who sat sewing in the room, noticed this.

"Haven't you read long enough, daughter?" she asked.

"I'm 'most through. There are only twenty pages left," Adelaide replied.

"But if you are tired of reading, why not stop?"

"Oh, I'm bound to finish the book now," said Adelaide. "I have set myself so many pages to read every day, and must go through to make up the number."

"What have you been reading about for the last ten or fifteen minutes?" asked Mrs. White.

Adelaide turned back the leaves of her book, and began running her eyes over the pages.

"Shut your book and tell me," said her mother.

Adelaide closed her book and tried to remember, but was

TIRED OF READING.

able to give only a very confused idea of what she had been reading.

"Why do you read?" inquired her mother.

Adelaide was silent.

"You read to know, do you not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Not to see how many pages you can go over in a given time. One page a day, if remembered, is better than a hundred if forgotten.

"Put away your book, dear, and go out into the garden, or if you feel like it, run up this seam for me. In an hour from this time you can take up your book again, and then you will get something out of it."

"I guess you are right," said Adelaide, and she shut her book. "Let me run up the seam for you. I feel just like sewing."

And in a few moments her light fingers made the needle fly along the seam. All her weariness of mind and body was gone. After an hour spent in sewing, she ran out into the garden and breathed the pure, sweet air, feeling light and happy as a bird.

In the evening she finished her book, enjoying every page.

Reading is like eating. Knowledge is food for the mind. If we keep on eating after we have satisfied hunger, our food loses its relish, and the more of it we take into the stomach, the more it burdens and hurts us. And so of reading. So long as we understand and relish our books, if they are of the right kind, reading does us good. But to force ourselves to

read when the mind is weary and cannot think—thinking about what we read is like digesting food in the stomach—is to oppress and weaken its powers.

A little reading well understood is better than a great deal that is not.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER.

RUB-A-DUB! rub-a-dub-dub!

For half an hour the sound of Robie's drum had come up to me from the room below, and rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub-dub, it still went on.

"I must talk to our little soldier-boy," said I to myself, and so went down stairs.

There he stood, with knapsack and sword and drum, gazing intently on a troop of wooden horsemen arranged on a small round table. His eyes were bright and his countenance full of interest. The soldier-spirit was on him. How handsome he looked! He stopped drumming as I entered the room, and in a little while sat down, showing signs of fatigue, for, as I have said, his rub-a-dub had been going on steadily for at least half an hour.

"Going to be a soldier?" said I.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered, promptly.

"And kill people?"

"Only enemies," he replied.

"Have you enemies?" I asked.

The question set him to thinking.

"There's Bill Toland," he answered, after a long pause, with a flash of anger in his eyes. "I guess he's an enemy, for he threw stones at me yesterday, and last week broke my kite all to pieces. He's kicked my marbles out of the ring ever so many times."

"Then you would like to kill Bill Toland?" said I.

"No, ma'am, I wouldn't, but I'd like to give him a good pounding if I was strong enough," answered Robie.

"But you are not, so the fight would be unequal, and you'd get the worst of it. It may be that a good pounding, as you say, would be of service to Bill Toland and teach him to let other boys alone. But I'm afraid that if you were strong enough to do the pounding, you would, in punishing one enemy, get yourself into the power of others more malignant and hurtful."

"Oh! He has lots of boys to help him as bad as himself. I know that well enough. Bill's one of a gang, and they call themselves Wild Cats."

"I'm sorry for that," I answered, "but when I spoke of other enemies, I did not mean Bill Toland's Wild Cat gang, but the troop of bad feelings, such as anger, hatred and cruelty, that would rush into your soul, if you angrily undertook to punish Bill for throwing stones at you and breaking your kite. You might, if strong enough, pound him sorely, but I'm afraid, after all, that you would get the worst of it from other enemies, who might take you off your guard, and hurt your spirit with the fires of evil passion."

Robie's face grew grave and thoughtful.

"You understand me, do you not?" I asked.

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, without hesitation.

"Bad feelings," I said, "are our worst enemies, as I have often told you. Against these every one has to fight, and we must conquer them or they will conquer us. In this warfare we fight by the sword of truth. Do you know what that means?"

"No, ma'am," he answered, with his clear eyes looking steadily into mine.

"A real truth is something from the Bible, for the Bible is God's word, and what God speaks must be the very truth itself. *Love your enemies* is a truth, and may become like a sword in your mind."

"How?" my boy asked, with his earnest eyes still looking into my face.

"Why do you feel like giving Bill Toland a good pounding?" I asked.

"Because I'd like to punish him for breaking up my kite and throwing stones at me."

"That is, you are angry and wish to be revenged on him."

Robie thought for a little while, and then answered,

"Yes, ma'am, I guess that is it."

"The Bible says, Love your enemies. Now, if you take that truth as a sword and fight with it, against whom will you fight? Not angrily against Bill Toland, but against the feeling of revenge in your heart that urges you to hurt him all you can. And as soon as you begin to conquer this feeling kindness will flow in, and you will feel sorry for Bill, and wish to do him good

instead of harm. And so you will become a soldier in a better and higher sense than you desired just now. There is a *good* fight, my dear boy! We must all be soldiers, and give battle to the enemies that are within our hearts. Anger, selfishness, hatred and all wrong and evil desires,—these are our worst enemies, who are ever seeking to overcome and destroy us, and we must gird on the sword of truth and fight against them, sure of conquest if we are watchful and brave, for in this fight they who are for us are stronger than all who are against us, for God and his angels are on our side."