"I DIDN'T HEAR,"

OR,

ALICE LEONARD.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "I FORGOT," "BY AND BY," ETC., ETC.

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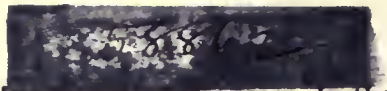

CONTENTS.

I DIDN'T HEAR.

I.

ALICE LEONARD.

VERY early in Alice Leonard's life she began to show a dreamy imaginative nature. Her mother was decidedly a practical little woman, not much given to telling fairy stories to her babies, nor to dealing in the visionary or unreal in any way. But the little Alice was hardly out of long clothes before she began to develop a strong tendency to "make believe."

"Now, mamma," she would say before she could talk plainly, "I'm doin' to be tousin May to-day.

This cousin May was a little girl who lived far away among the granite hills of New Hampshire, and whom Alice had never seen, but of whom she had been told, and about whom her imagination had always had the liveliest play. So after making such an announcement as the above, all day long the little actress would play her part, never once making a mistake or letting her tongue slip. Instead of mamma and papa, it was "Uncle John" and "Aunt Margaret," and brother Harry was "Cousin Harry." Of course, being a visitor, she would be on her very prettiest behavior, and go tripping about the room in the daintiest style, and with as many foreign airs as she could devise. The very tones of her voice and carriage of her head were evidently imported, and corresponded with her ideal of the little far-away cousin. She would feign the greatest possible interest in things which had always been familiar, and ask questions, and express her surprise and admiration, as if she really were just from Yankee-land! It was funny enough to hear her.

"What a booful tarpet you do have, Aunt Margaret—I never did see!"

"Is that a picser of 'Suffer 'ittle children' on the wall there, Aunt Margaret? I've seen *him* in New Hampseer. I dess every body teeps him to look at—he is so booful."

Then she would pick up some little old plaything that she and Harry had played with from their babyhood, and cry out, "O tousin Harry! what is this pitty thing? Do tell me how to pay with it, tousin Harry!"

Her exclamations over the different scenery from that to which she was accustomed in "New Hampseer," were the oddest of all her little pieces of acting, and showed how her keen little mind had treasured up every word of description she had ever heard, and her vivid imagination made up all deficiencies.

"Is that an oak tree out there, Uncle John? We have a big e'm tree in our yard at home—an' don't you have mountains here? *Our* mountains go way up to the sky! This is a booful place, but ours is a most boofuller!

Her mother could hardly keep up with her

in this mimic life, and indeed used to find that such extended theatrical performances were rather fatiguing; but to her father it was always so inexpressibly funny, and the little creature showed so much genius in her flights of fancy that he often started her off in some new direction just for his own amusement. There is a good deal of difference, however, between the mother's never-ceasing intercourse with a child and the father's brief little play-times, and it is just possible that if Mr. Leonard had had to play he was "Uncle John" all day long, it might not have seemed so funny! As it was, he never tired of her bright little impersonations, and used often to beg mamma's indulgence, as it was "the only theatre he ever attended, and it was such an unexpected elevation to him to be father to the 'star'!"

Mrs. Leonard was really troubled, the little creature was so "stagey," but like many other childish freaks, it did not last a great while. Still the same fondness for living in an ideal world seemed to be always cropping out in

one way or another. All little girls love dollies. That is one of the fixed and settled laws of nature! There are not exceptions enough to prove the rule! But with Alice it was a sort of infatuation. She had dollies of every possible description, big and little, young and old, white and black! And she could make them out of anything under the sun! That was a fortunate thing, for Mr. Leonard had to set bounds to his expenses—pretty narrow ones, too, and Mrs. Leonard, like the good wife she was, counted the sixpences, and was a close economist.

So Alice had only one lovely great princess of a wax doll, that was a present from her Uncle Harold. Then there was one "rag baby," that dated away back into Alice's own babyhood, and which was very dear to her heart, and there was the big china dolly that papa gave her on her sixth birthday, and which she loved for his sake as well as its own, and there were all the rest! One was built on so peculiar a foundation as a corn-cob —one on a dilapidated "ten-pin"—clothes-pins

served an admirable purpose as bases to these structures, and the anatomies of others were worn-out tassels! Anything in short that had the faintest semblance of a head on it could be worked into this family without the slightest difficulty. Indeed, it wasn't absolutely necessary that Alice's people should have heads at all! In this respect she quite outdid nature—what a lucky thing it would be for some of us if heads were not so indispensable!

A nice row of apples could be transformed into rosy-cheeked children by this little enchantress with a single uplift of the wonder-working wand of her fancy, and a box of empty spools made the nicest kind of scholars for a play-school. She would have names for each, and arrange them in classes, and have them learn lessons and recite, and have recesses and eat dinners, and be praised and scolded and whipped and dismissed, all according to her ideal of an Institution of Learning. She had never then been to school a day!

In summer there was literally no end to the material which she picked up out of doors

and converted into citizens for her play-house but flowers she found particularly available. They were so beautiful, and had such pretty names all ready for use. Violet and Rose Daisy and Daffodil, didn't need any rechristening. Alice had a way of turning flowers into wee people, by just bending the petals all backward and tying them down with a bit of thread or a blade of grass, and I assure you they made very presentable little folks. Poppies were "perfectly lovely," gotten up in this style, they had such nice little heads, all ready as if on purpose. How gorgeously dressed these flower-children were! That was another of their charms. No troublesome "taking thought for raiment" connected with them, and yet "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these!"

Alice was quite as gifted, too, in getting up play-houses and furniture. In winter she would take possession of one corner of the parlor, fix a boundary line of chairs, divide her house into rooms with strips of paper, and move in with her entire establishment of dol-

ues, cradles, dishes, and nobody knows what, and go to housekeeping in lilliputian fashion. Or if mamma couldn't spare her quite so much room, she would take her paper dollies and get up just as extensive a *mènage* on a corner of the table, or in a big pasteboard box. She could cut surprisingly good sets of furniture out of stiff bits of paper, and turn a little box into an ottoman or a bureau, with real drawers, in the most ingenious way.

Then in summer she had the loveliest little sylvan abode out under the great oak-tree, with boards laid around for partitions, and all manner of devices for domestic operations. What exquisite little dishes the acorn-cups made, and how bits of broken earthen and glass did ornament the pantry shelves! Then how elegant were the dollies' parasols, made out of mushrooms, and what could equal corn-silk for children's hair?

Such experiences as those dollies had! They went through everything that human flesh is heir to, and some things beside! The children had the measles and the mumps and

the scarlet-fever, and coughed themselves almost to strangulation with whooping-cough. They were vaccinated, and most considerately looked after in every way, yet would do imprudent things sometimes, and get most alarmingly sick. Then Harry came in play as family doctor. As a general thing, if Harry had not been the very best-natured boy in the world, he would have voted this whole dolly-business a great bore, but as it was, he allowed himself to be victimized by Alice to almost any extent, and shared her plays with exemplary fortitude, if not with positive enjoyment. But a violent case of sickness was much more in his line, and Alice had to get them up frequently to keep him in good spirits.

These wonderful dollies grew up too, and put on long dresses, and had beaux, and were wooed and won and married in the most rulable way—white veils orange blossoms, pearls, bridesmaids, wedding-cake, clergyman, (Harry, of course,) and all. I would really like to tell you what all this paraphernalia was made out of, but I haven't room!

Then there would be calls and visiting, and gossiping, strange to say, and church-going—here Harry was worked in again to the very best advantage, as eloquent young preacher—and parties and rides and picnics—everything you can think of!

Every little while, too, a little new baby would appear, and be duly nursed and called upon by interested friends, to whom it would be brought out and shown, all enveloped in flannel and in very long clothes! As these babies grew older, they were duly petted and instructed and disciplined and governed. It was a complete mimicry of real life, and was often really very instructive to on-lookers, for who could see such a faithful mirror held up to themselves and not be benefited. It is wholesome for us all sometimes "to see ourselves as others see us."

As Alice grew a little older, her busy fancy led her off in another direction, and this was to fairy-land. She learned to read very easily, and then of course took to stories with wonderful avidity. Some of the fairy lore, dear

to all children, fell into her possession, and she was fairly carried away with delight. When the portals of that lovely country were once opened to her, it seemed as if she never could be enticed back again. She just abandoned herself to the charming delusion, read everything she could lay her hands on that told about the "little folk," and made up with her vivid creative faculty whatever was lacking in her information. The woods and the brooks and the very air were all alive to her. To be sure she knew just as well as you or I that giants and dwarfs, genii, brownies and fairies were as unreal as ghosts and hobgoblins, but do you think that dampened her enthusiasm? Doesn't the great Mr. Barnum tell us that we all dote on being humbugged? And then this fairy lore is such a dear, delightful, time-honored piece of deception; any of us may be pardoned, I think, for having a weakness that way. It is morally wholesome, too; doesn't virtue always come out triumphant, and the bad people get their just dues? It is so satisfactory to see such impartial justice adminis-

tered. For my part I would a great deal rather read of it in fairy books than not to meet with it at all. We certainly get precious little of it in real life!

So by the time our Alice was twelve years old, she had devoured all the literature of this sort that lay within her reach, from "Cinderella" and "Blue Beard" up to "The Tempest" and "The Midsummer Night's Dream," out of which she failed to get all the meaning, of course, but still found very readable.

The "Arabian Nights' Entertainment" would have entertained her nights far too fully, if her judicious mother hadn't made some good rules about her bed-time; and yet she was so far from being satisfied with other people's fairy stories that she fell to inventing them, and fairly rivalled Scheherezade and Hans Christian Andersen, at least with the multiplicity of her imaginations! She never lacked for an audience when she chose to tell her pretty fancies. Harry liked giants and dragons, and even elves and fairies, vastly better than dolls; and the younger boys, particu-

larly Johnny, would sit entranced just as long as Alice pleased to talk—and it certainly pleased Alice to talk! It was a rare sweet gift she had, and nothing could be more picturesque than to see the little dreamer sitting under the big oak telling fairy stories to the children lying round her on the grass, unless it was the same group by the winter fire.

The Leonard children took a world of pleasure in acting little dramas, sometimes of their own invention, but generally founded on some fairy story, that they could adapt to their own powers and possessions, and in these Alice shone of course as the bright, particular star. Such a genius as she had for imagining how things ought to be, and such unlimited ability at getting up costumes and supplying all deficiencies generally! Then, when there really couldn't be anything done in the way of scenery or dress as it ought to be, or even when they lacked several important people, she could always, as a last resort, "make believe' herself, and coax the rest to "make believe,'

to an extent that was, to say the least, something of a tax on their imaginations!

All this brilliant power that the charming little girl possessed, was a source of almost unalloyed pleasure to herself and to others. It made her a very easy child to take care of. She hardly ever was known to ask the question which some little people ask every ten minutes all day long, "Now what shall I do?" Neither was she ever dependent to any great extent on those about her for employment or amusement. She was so full of her own pretty devices, and so perfectly well and happy-tempered, that Mrs. Leonard would sometimes almost forget that she had a little Alice, and many a visitor almost envied her mother this sweet little self-amusing girl.

"How did you teach her to take care of herself so?" they would ask despairingly, thinking of some dear little uneasy spirit in their own homes, who wearied everybody with constant demands on their time and attention; but Mrs. Leonard knew it was none of her teaching; it was the gift of Heaven!

But since the days of Eden I suppose no thornless rose has ever blossomed in our world. There will be always some draw-back to the very best gift, and so there was about this inventive little genius. She was too self-absorbed. She was not only busy when her mother wanted her to be so, but when she did not wish it. The little maiden would be so wrapped up in her own schemes and imaginations that it was almost impossible to get her attention. When she was absorbed in her play or her reading, her senses seemed really locked up, and not a little difficult was it to get at their hiding-place. This trouble began to show itself very early in her life—indeed about as soon as she developed any traits of character at all. When she was but two or three years old, her mother would often think the little feet might even then begin to save her own tired ones a few steps, and very willing were the little ones to fly in mamma's service, but it was quite an undertaking to wake the little dreamer, or call her out of fairy land, or that mysterious realm where dollies live

"Alice, dear, will you hand mamma her scissors?" perhaps would be the request; but it would be entirely unheeded. Then after a moment more, mamma would speak again, "Alice, will you give mamma her scissors?—mamma is in a hurry." No answer, and no cessation in the busy-body's play. "Alice! listen to mamma!" and perhaps by that time the blue eyes would look up inquiringly, and by the third repetition of her request the mother would succeed in getting her scissors. Sometimes her attention could not be gained even so easily as this, and the mother would have to touch the little girl to make her notice that she was being spoken to, so that it was rather doubtful if it was very profitable help that Mrs. Leonard had from the little daughter; it was altogether too laborious to secure it. However, if she persevered till she caught Alice's eye or ear, she always felt rewarded by the cheerful zeal with which the little girl ran to do her bidding. Still she would think there ought to be a word of reproof about the delay and so would say, gen-

tly, "My dear, why didn't you mind mamma quicker?" There would always be the same innocent, wondering look, and the reply, "I didn't hear you, mamma—I tan't tome till I hear you, tan I?" And the mother would be quite disarmed.

Harry was much more alert, and was a valuable ally to his mother about getting Alice's attention. He would often volunteer his services in the drollest way, as for instance, when the mother had spoken two or three times, he would say, "Now let me do and poke her—she fas' asleep, I dess!" and off he would go to the corner where Alice had ensconced herself, and speedily dispel her illusions with the vigorous punches of his small fat fist.

He had some trials himself with her, and so was quite interested in disciplining her. As a general thing, two steps were not of so much account to him as they were to his mother, and if he could not reach Alice by words, he could very easily get near enough to make himself felt. I fear the little lady did not always relish the abrupt way in which her

brother brought her down out of the clouds and proved herself very earthly in the way which she greeted the intruder. She, too, had a pair of little fat fists, and they did lively execution sometimes when Harry had fairly roused her temper. A very capable little tongue she had too, and she would bestow on him a scolding, in language which was considerably broken, but with a vast amount of strength still left in it! "Do 'way, you dreat naughty boy! What you mean tomin' right in my house, an' never knock nor nothin'! I sha'n't never like you adain, nor my dolly s'a'n't, an' you s'a'n't never tome to tea wiz us!" and Harry would be glad to beat a hasty retreat, promising to be more guarded about his mode of entrance the next time!

Mrs. Leonard generally felt pretty sure of a hearing if she could catch her little girl's eye, but it wasn't always certain even then. She would call to Alice until she looked up, and then begin to talk; sometimes giving her quite a lengthy direction about something she wished her to do, and then be greeted at the end

with, "What did you say, mamma? I didn't hear?"

Sometimes, too, Alice would seem to hear and understand, and would start off promptly to do the errand; then suddenly stop, look puzzled, and come back with the same story, only she had a more apologetic tone, "What did you say, mamma? I didn't hear!"

Mrs. Leonard finally learned to know her little daughter pretty thoroughly, and would say to her, if she wanted to make sure of her hearing, "Now come here, Alice, and look straight into my eyes. Do you see me? Now will you hear me?" Then, when she had succeeded in fairly getting the dreamy, absent look out of the blue eyes, she would say what she had to say.

When Harry and Alice were four years old,

> "Right into their house one day
> A dear little angel came,"

who in process of time proved to be a darling little baby brother. This was Johnny, afterward surnamed "the Miller," with whom the

readers of "By and By" are considerably acquainted.

Still, two years later, there was another baby boy, who was made very welcome, of course, and named Willoughby, which was speedily shortened into Will, but afterwards frequently lengthened out again into "Will o' the Wisp," on account of his being such a little whisk-about.

By that time the mother's hands were pretty full, for the children were a hungry, happy, lively set, and they had to have so much bread and butter spread, and so many cups of milk poured, and so many cookies baked for them, that it was about as much as one person could do to keep their mouths from clamoring after something to eat.

Then they outgrew and tore and wore out their clothes in a truly discouraging way. Their mother used to wish they had garments like the Israelites', that "waxed not old," though she would have been sufficiently thankful to have had them simply have the quality of not getting soiled, which I hope the

Israelites' clothes also possessed! If they could only have been like the lilies of the field, now, what a happy thing it would have been for her! There were such hosts of jackets and aprons, such piles of dresses and bibs! Then the stockings were a sight to see, and the holes in them, as they lay piled up in her mending basket, were frequently five times as numerous as the stockings! Yet all these various garments that one pair of hands kept made and mended! For Mr. Leonard was a poor man when he commenced business, and the pressure of debt was still upon him, so that they had to live in a very economical way. They tried to have the help always of one good domestic, but it was often impossible to find any but very incapable girls, so that frequently Mrs. Leonard had an additional burden of household work. But the sewing she always tried to do unaided in those days; she did not even have the help of a sewing-machine, as in later years. Indeed, machines were by no means so common then as now; it was more than a dozen years ago.

Having told you all this about the mother's cares and labors, you will see that she needed every possible aid that she could have, and even the little six-years-old twins, Harry and Alice, had to be somewhat pressed into the service. They were very nice little helpers, too. Mrs. Leonard would often feel that although of course they added to her labors, yet she could hardly take care of the younger children, and do all that she had to do without the help of her "Gemini." Harry could play so nicely and kindly with little Johnny, or go on errands to the market or the stores; and Alice could take such beautiful care of the baby, or run up-stairs or down cellar, and so save steps for mamma, and she could dust furniture very nicely, and even sew a little. So you see such a valuable little housewife and nursery maid could not be spared to play with dollies all the time. Besides, Mrs. Leonard had made up her mind that she would teach her children early to be useful and industrious and thoughtful of other people. She had missed this early training so much in her own

experience that she determined to do all she could to avoid a similar error with her children's education. Not that she meant to burden them at all, or fetter their childish liberty; she simply meant to be sure that a little germ of self-denial and care-taking should be early planted and nourished in their young hearts. Perhaps she was not quite as successful in her efforts as some others might have been who had no better intentions, for she was just a little lacking in decision, as she was well aware; but her idea was right, and she earnestly tried to carry it out in her practice.

Very early in life, therefore, the little Alice was told to bring her little rocking-chair and sit by the cradle, while mamma made bread or swept, or did some of the numberless other things that were always needing to be done. It was the kind of care that Alice liked best, for she never was very much given to running and playing in the lively, stirring way that most children enjoy, and her own peculiar kind of plays she could carry on admirably right by the cradle-side. She could have one

of her own babies in her lap and talk to it softly all the while without in the least disturbing the dreams of the human baby, but on the contrary, rather soothing the little sleeper with her low crooning. She had a vast amount, too, of pretty baby talk wherewith to entertain baby Will if he opened his black eyes prematurely, and with which he always deigned to be greatly pleased. Baby-tending was always very congenial work with Alice. But when it came to dusting, and running upstairs, and such things as that, they were extremely distasteful to our dainty little lady. She never did them except under compulsion, or from a stern sense of duty! Alice was a nice, conscientious little girl, devotedly fond of her mamma, and so of the greatest service to her in these little ways, but when she was deep in some of her favorite amusements, and mamma wanted her to come and scour knives, for instance, it did seem as if she "didn't hear" quite so well even as common! It couldn't be possible, could it, that she turned a deaf ear purposely towards her dear tired mother? One

thing must be said in her defence, she did not ever, or at least hardly ever, say by way of apology to her mother on these occasions, when she failed to respond to a call for help, "I didn't hear;" she simply acted as if she had some defect about her dear little ears, and her mother was so accustomed to this defect that she did not deal with the case as she might otherwise have done. But after a while it became evident, even to one so strongly prejudiced in her favor as her mother, that Alice's deafness did not seem quite the same always. There certainly were some curious phenomena connected with it! Her mother could not bear to suspect her dear little girl of wilful deception in the matter, but she watched her closely, and found to her dismay that it surely was so.

Alice's deafness was frequently a verification of the old proverb, that "None are so deaf as those that won't hear!" Her wishes evidently had considerable to do with it. If what mamma said was, "Alice would you like to come out and walk with me?—I'm going down

street," the spell would seem to be broken instantly; no matter how absorbed she was, down would go dollies or books, and an eager "Oh, yes! mamma, do please let me go!" showed that her senses *could* be just as alert as Harry's, or any other small body's.

But if the call came in from the kitchen, "Alice, dear, will you come quickly and run down cellar and get mamma some potatoes?' it was really surprising, not to say aggravating, to see how hopelessly deaf that same little girl would be!

So Mrs. Leonard found to her sorrow that the "open sesame" to Alice's pretty little organs of hearing was simply to speak of something which the little woman enjoyed doing!

Still Mrs. Leonard was almost sure that Alice did not mean to be dishonest, and I think she was right in her conclusions. There is a very mysterious connection between the outer sense and the inner perception. We do not any of us know much about it, but we all know we can hear or not pretty much as we have a mind to.

Alice was a trustworthy, conscientious little girl, as I have before said—very sensitive to praise or blame, very anxious to do just right, and prove herself one of "Jesus's little lambs" —a claim which she had always made with the sweetest and most child-like assurance of faith, and which no one who knew her was disposed to dispute.

So her mother wisely thought that she needed to have her conscience *educated* on this subject, and earnestly set herself about the work—reproving, rebuking, exhorting, instructing in the old, old way, so familiar to every good mother, from the days of Eve downward through the whole course of time.

She saw the good results of her labors, I am glad to tell you; and as the years went by her little daughter grew to be a very dutiful little maiden, who, if she was somewhat dreamy and absent, had right principles in her head and heart; which she faithfully tried to put into daily practice.

II.

THE LITTLE POETESS.

WHEN I tell you that these queer little ears of Alice Leonard's, notwithstanding their occasional dullness, were very perfectly attuned to a perception of rhyme and rhythm, you will not need to have me add that she was exceedingly fond of poetry. What with her lively fancy and imagination, her fondness for books and stories, and this keen sense of harmonious language, you will know that she had all the needed elements to make a very poetic little body. She loved stories dearly, even when told in prose, but just let them have the added charms of rhyme,

and they were irresistible indeed. Everything that had a jingle to it was delightful to her ear at first, but after a while she grew more critical, and demanded beautiful ideas as well as beautiful sounds.

Harry and Alice both doted on "Mother Goose" in their babyhood, and knew it pretty much all by heart before Harry was promoted to boys' clothes; indeed, they never quite lost their relish for it; but then there is more fun and force in Mother Goose than some people ever find out!

They also had various children's books of poetry that they used to read over and over, and which they mutually enjoyed, but by and by their tastes grew a little divergent—Harry's branching off more and more towards prose, while Alice found poetry more and more enchanting. At last she began to "court the muses" herself—very shyly at first, but with increasing boldness as she gained confidence in her new-fledged powers.

Some of her earliest efforts were funny enough; and some of them were worth re-

membering, to say the least. There was one that dated back to the time when she was not yet three years old! Of course it was not written, except on her mother's heart, where it was engraved as with the "point of a diamond." This is a true copy:

"If Alice should die, mamma would cry,
And Alice would cry if mamma should die!"

I think her little "potery," as she called it, quite superior to some much more pretentious effusions. It had both rhyme and reason to commend it, and it also had the great merit of conciseness. There was one heart, too, that found it pathetic, and, as I said, treasured it upon the tablets of memory.

But most of the little rhymer's verses were never committed either to paper or memory, and so perished entirely like premature violets.

By the time Alice was eight or ten years old, her talent for verse-making had developed considerably, and was often called out by passing events. It was a most fortunate thing for

her that she had an abounding love of fun. It saved her from the dreadful fate of being sentimental. She always saw the funny side of things, even of her own poetry, and had a wholesome dread of making herself ridiculous. Then there was Harry forever beside her, and ready to "poke her," as he was when she "didn't hear" in their baby days. He would never let her grow lackadaisical—not he! She hardly dared to take a good long look at the sky when he was around, and as to the stars, and that poor, much-abused orb, the moon, she would have jumped out of the window before she would have let Harry catch her gazing at them! But when her practical, fun-loving brother went fishing, or visiting some of his young friends, then Alice did enjoy some poetical freedom, and I haven't a doubt she wrote an ode to the moon before she was twelve years old.

But even Harry appreciated Alice's poetical gifts when she would condescend to be funny; as, for instance, when she wrote an epitaph for a pet woodchuck of his, which came to an un-

timely end, as most of his pets did. This is the verse:

"Here lies poor Chucky,
Who was so unlucky,
In an evil hour, to fall in the power
Of a heartless boy, who robbed him of joy,
And tried to make a friend of him,
But only made an end of him!"

Harry thought that beat "Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard;" and he was even willing to submit to the epithet "heartless," since it had so good an effect in the poem!

Our little poetess even turned her gift to a source of pecuniary profit once—older bards have done the same, I suppose! She was employed by a sort of love-lorn domestic to detail her "feeelings and emotions" in a touching ballad. Bridget was to furnish the subject of each verse, and Alice to convert it into poetry. There resulted fourteen verses, and Bridget generously rewarded her with twenty-five cents! If any of my young readers, on the strength of this information, should think of adopting the poet's profession, I will

tell them that they must not expect always to be so liberally paid as this, even by editors who publish their effusions. The obligation is often thought to be on the other side!

But Alice used her pleasant gift mostly to gratify her own inclinations, and amuse her young friends. It was quite an advantage to be able to turn off so promptly a parody or an elegy! Then the scholars in the graded school, where Harry and Alice went, had a monthly literary paper, named *The Echo*, and of course it set a high value on poetical contributions. Alice was very popular, and her poems in great demand.

If a little girl in the neighborhood lost a canary bird, she straightway begged Alice to commemorate the sad event in verse; and on St. Valentine's day she could not begin to fill her orders!

Alice enjoyed it all, even to the writing of elegiac verses, but her mother used to wish sometimes that she could banish the muses. The truth was, Alice was never so absent-minded as when she was poetizing. It was

almost impossible to get her attention sufficiently enlisted in common things to have her do them well. She meant to be helpful and dutiful, and there was a certain round of daily duties that she could go through mechanically, and still have her thoughts at the ends of the earth. I don't know but she washed the glass and silver after each of the three daily meals, just as well when her eyes had that far-away look in them as when she was conscious of each separate spoon and tumbler; but there are some things that require one's whole attention, even in common domestic work, and in these our poor little poetess sometimes failed signally. I assure you she was very much troubled about her short-comings; for she was not one of those little misses who are perfectly willing that "mother" should bear all the heat and burden of the day, and she cared very much indeed for her dear father's comfort and happiness. As I have already told you, she was very sensitive, and she would rather have one of her mother's approving smiles than almost any amount of

fame among her schoolmates, though she fully appreciated the latter.

You may think of her now as twelve years old. Will is no longer the baby, but a never-still little fellow of six. There is a new occupant for the cradle in the shape of little Rosa, to whom Alice is entirely devoted. They have good Johanna Corrigan in the kitchen, but she has by no means learned all the mysteries of cooking, so Mrs. Leonard and Alice find plenty to do in every department of the household. Alice is almost as tall as her mother, who is a little body; and she has rosier cheeks, but the same light graceful figure. She has grown up young, but is strong and well. Mrs. Leonard, too, is always well. "It isn't the fashion to be sick at our house," Harry used to say, and Mr. Leonard was very thankful it was his market bill that was enormous, and not the doctor's!

It is Saturday morning, and Alice is going to make some gingerbread — real, old-fashioned, "training-day" gingerbread — from Grandmother Leonard's recipe. Mr. Leonard

thought there was no cake in the world that could compare with his mother's molasses gingerbread, and his wife did her best to make it when she began housekeeping, but although she tried all the rules her cookery books afforded, and consulted all her neighbors, she never could get the real genuine Yankee-land taste into it; so she wrote to Mr. Leonard's mother and got her directions as nearly as possible—the good woman had never measured a single ingredient before—and, armed with this, Mrs. Leonard addressed herself to the task once more, but alas, with not much better success! "I guess he will have to be a hungry boy again to have it just right—the flavor of youth and 'training-day' is what is wanting!" she thought. But Alice is going to make some, and she has on a big apron and looks very ambitious. She measures and beats and stirs in a very scientific way; but, if you will believe it, she is intent on some poetry this morning, and her thoughts keep running off upon rhymes and figures in a truly unmanageable way. She butters her tins and puts

the batter into them, all with a dreamy ex pression. Mrs. Leonard called to her as she was putting the tins into the oven, "A slow oven, Alice," and Alice answers, "Yes'm," but in truth does not know what her mother said, she is so full of her fancies. Then she sits down in the kitchen to watch the progress of the gingerbread, and fully purposes to look at it every five minutes, she is so anxious to have her father think it is exactly right. But she can't think of being idle, and she has a convenient paper and pencil in her pocket, which she takes out and proceeds to use. Ten or fifteen minutes ran away and she was still deep in her metaphors, and wholly forgetful of the oven, when the ever-watchful mother called again, "Alice, are you keeping a close eye on that gingerbread?" "Yes'm—no, ma'am, I mean!" said Alice, coming out of her revery and dashing at the oven in hot haste.

Oh, what a sight was there! My pen hesitates to describe the blackened, smoking ruins of those four tins full of delicious gingerbread! As Alice opened the oven doors, the smoke

poured out, and she stood aghast over the wreck! Johanna held up her hands and ejaculated, "Howly Saint Patrick!"

Mrs. Leonard heard Johanna's fervent exclamation, and the tell-tale odor which rushed in explained its cause, but she, too, came and gazed on the charred remains.

"Why, my dear child," she said, "I told you it needed a *slow* oven, and you put it into a very hot one!"

"I didn't hear you," said Alice, ruefully.

Mrs. Leonard looked around a moment, and her eye fell on the guilty paper and pencil, lying conspicuously on the table, amid flour and sugar and molasses. Her eyebrows went up a little. "Ah! poetry!" she said, with that peculiar falling inflection which indicates that there is not the least need of inquiring farther.

Poor Alice! She felt a good deal worse, I don't doubt, than did Alfred the Great when a somewhat similar catastrophe overtook him, even though she did not get the boxed ear that tradition gives to the unlucky royal baker!

Her cheeks grew redder with that glance

of her mother's than they had been before with the heat and excitement. She sprang forward, and with a quick, impetuous movement caught the offending sheet of paper and consigned it to a more fiery furnace than the one that had ruined the gingerbread, and then she fled away up-stairs to her own room. Nobody knows how long she would have remained there, plunged in grief, if her sympathizing mother had not gone up after a few moments and comforted her in her dear maternal way.

"It is no matter at all, my dear," she said, putting her arm around her, "about the gingerbread. It is only a trifling waste. You left the things all on the table, and I have already made some more. I am ever so sorry you burned up your verses, if you cared for them. But, my darling, you will never try to write poetry and watch an oven again, will you? 'One thing at a time' is a safe old rule, my little girl; and I don't believe Mrs. Browning herself could write so beautifully if she was disturbed by a constant anxiety about

some gingerbread! The poetry or the gingerbread, one of them, if not both, would be almost sure to suffer!"

So Alice tried to be consoled, kissed her mother, brushed her hair, and washed off the last traces of flour and of tears, then came down stairs, and was more than ever devoted to baby Rosa.

The lesson lasted her quite a long time. She certainly did not carry her writing into the kitchen any more, but kept her unfinished poems up-stairs in her own room, in the nice little portfolio her father gave her on her twelfth birthday.

As to the pretty songs that were forever singing themselves in her busy little head, she tried more than ever to set some bounds to their control over her thoughts, but she found these far more difficult to fetter. I rather think that will be her life-work.

It was war-time then, and every patriotic little girl in the land was at work for the soldiers. Our Alice proved herself a very capable little woman, and devoted herself to the

Sanitary Commission with almost as much ardor as she had hitherto shown to the "Sacred Nine."

Two years after Alice's unfortunate attempt to combine poetizing and baking, the little girls in Clear Rapids had a fair for the benefit of the Commission, and Alice crocheted and knit, made pen-wipers and watch-cases, just as zealously as any other little maiden. Then they all made comfort-bags to be sent with the larger articles of their mothers' making. Some of them thought it would be nice to put a note in each of the bags, so that the soldier who got the bag might know how many kind and grateful thoughts went with these tiny comforters. Would you like to know what Alice wrote and dropped into hers? This was it:

"Soldier boy, soldier boy! fighting for me,
Little thou ken'st who is writing to thee,
If e'er thou hast seen her, or ever shalt see!

"As little it matters, O brave soldier boy!
If ne'er I have shared in thy sorrow or joy.
Enough 'tis for me that I know thy employ!

"God keep thee, soldier boy, whate'er may come,
Watch over thy footsteps wherever they roam,
'Out of the jaws of death' bring thee safe home!"

It is not very much of a poem, perhaps, but it was quite as well as to write a more "gushing" sort of a letter, and ask for the soldier's photograph, wasn't it? Her father and mother thought so.

There was one person, however, who did not have a very elevated opinion of this "poetry business"—this was "Aunt Huldah." The same good body who berated Harry so soundly once, as is duly and truly recorded in our "By and By" story. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," says the wise man, and Aunt Huldah was a warm friend of the Leonards, as she proved by the faithfulness of her wounds, as well as in other ways.

Now that there was still another little claimant on Mrs. Leonard's time and thoughts, and Alice's time was necessarily so much taken up in school, Mrs. Leonard found it the wisest plan not to try any longer to do all the family-sewing. An excellent sewing-machine had

been her husband's Christmas gift, the winter after little Rosa's advent, and it had been accompanied with the earnest injunction that there should be no more evening-sewing done by his over-diligent wife.

So there came rest to the tired eyes. The family purse was growing fuller every year now, and there was no need of the mother's overtaxing herself. Very glad indeed was Mrs. Leonard to turn the making of her little boys' clothes over to Aunt Huldah; and the always prompt and liberal pay for this work was quite as acceptable to the excellent maiden lady, who took honest pride in her capabilities and independence. Aunt Huldah thought a great deal of the Leonards on the score of "auld acquaintance" with the father, so she came to their assistance with a more cheerful zeal than she deigned to show to other people, yet even from them she always expected a little coaxing before she would engage to do anything. Perhaps she thought that was required to keep up the dignity of her position and profession! It was a tribute everybody

paid willingly, for Aunt Huldah was a character! She was so straight and so punctual that Harry said she reminded him of a sundial, and so rigorously industrious that nobody could keep up with her! It was fatiguing, not to say self-abasing, to have her in one's family for a few days. She always sewed sitting in the hardest chair she could find in the room, and literally scorned to let her back have any support whatever! Think what a rebuke to common people!

She was by no means an uncommunicative, uninteresting person, however; but had a great amount of quaint wisdom, and a fund of shrewd humor, a memory stored with pointed anecdotes, and a very vigorous command of her racy, native, Yankee speech.

The children always stood in a little awe of her, but after all got a great amount of fun out of one of her visitations. If she dealt pretty severely with their short-comings, she always told them so many good stories, and said so many sharp things, that it quite compensated for the scoldings. So Alice was pleased when

her mother commissioned her to go and ask Aunt Huldah to come and spend a week with them, and help her put the boys' wardrobes to rights. It was at this time when, as I have been saying, all the womankind of Clear Rapids were filling a box for the soldiers, and when Alice came into Aunt Huldah's spotless domain, she found her making grey flannel shirts with the utmost vigor. For Aunt Huldah was as loyal as she was straight, and outdid everybody in working for "the boys in blue."

"Good morning, Aunt Huldah," said Alice.

"Mornin'," said the spinster, scarcely raising her eyes.

"You're as busy as ever," said Alice, pleasantly.

"Course I be," answered Aunt Huldah, "this ain't no time for folks to be idlin' round, if they're ever so lazy."

"No, indeed!" said Alice, "mother has been at work on some shirts just like those, and I've just finished a 'comfort-bag.'"

"Humph!" said Aunt Huldah, "a 'comfort-bag!'"

"Yes," Alice went on, unmindful of the con temptuous tone, "and I've been scraping lint. We must all work."

"Humph!" ejaculated Aunt Huldah again, 'you remind me of the man who clambered up overhead in his log house when the bear came in, and after his wife had killed the critter, down he comes all smiles, and says, 'Who'd a' thought *we* could a' killed that bear so easy?'"

Alice looked somewhat abashed, and Aunt Huldah went on. "I s'pose you think you know what work means, but you don't; girls don't know nothin' 'bout work now-a-days—don't get up till most noon, and then go round tattlin' and makin' fancy flumadiddles, and dragglin' white skirts for somebody else to wash and iron! I know 'em! 'Comfort-bags,' indeed! great comfort them bags 'll be to a set of awkward boys that don't know how to take hold of a needle—couldn't feel one if they had it between their fingers—half on em don' know whether women sew with pins or with needles! Then I s'pose all of you little popin-

jays went and wrote a long-winded letter, and tucked into your 'comfort-bags'?"

She paused for a reply, but Alice tried to look innocent and said nothing.

Oh, was it the tell-tale face, or was it Yankee guessing, or did some spirit whisper it to her! Her very next remark was:

"You put some varses into yourn, now, I'll be bound, didn't you?"

There was nothing left for Alice but to falter, "Yes, Aunt Huldah." But she hurried on to explain that there were only two or three little verses, and she had showed them to her father and mother, who were quite pleased with them.

Aunt Huldah suspended her work just long enough to throw her head back and laugh.

"Now hear that!" she said, "her 'father and mother are pleased with them,' to be sure! Why law sakes, was there ever a father and mother yet who could see the weak p'ints in their childern, or in their childern's varses! 'Cordin' to them, there's always the knowin'est

and smartest set comin' up that's been heard from yet!

"Now you just hark to me, Alice Leonard. I've knowed your grandmother too well not to care somethin' 'bout her grandchildren, and I couldn't rest easy nights if I didn't do my duty by you. I don't want to see you fizzlin' out in this style. You jest talk good plain English—that's good enough. Don't you go to twistin' your idees back-end forrids, and spinnin' out what you've got to say, and spendin' hours and hours fixin' it so it'll jingle! You jest talk right along as your grandmother did afore ye, and if you can say half as sensible things as she did, you may thank your stars, and not mind about makin' 'em jingle. I tell you what it is, there's too much work to be done in this 'ere world for folks that's got any brains, to be spending' their time in such a shiftless way. If you've got more time than you know what to do with, I wish to gracious I could borrer some of it!" And the hardly-driven lady sewed as if the fate of the nation hung on her needle instead of Gen. Grant's sword.

But by this time Alice was laughing merrily, and Aunt Huldah herself condescended to smile somewhat austerely. It emboldened Alice to speak a word in defence of poetry, if not of herself. Aunt Huldah was as rigidly righteous as she was diligent, and had a wonderful knowledge of the Bible. She was of course a most punctilious church-goer, too, and used always to "sing in meetin'," considering that a part of the service in which all should "jine," as she often said. No one doubted that she sang "with the spirit and the understanding," if her voice was somewhat cracked and "reedy." So Alice ventured to say:

"But there's poetry in the Bible, Aunt Huldah."

"Now jest to think o' that!" cried Aunt Huldah. "If that don't beat all! Comparin' the Holy Scripters to your nonsense! Alice Leonard, I thought better of you than that! But, then," she added, more resignedly, "these new-fangled poitesses air most all of 'em blasphemous!"

"Oh, Aunt Huldah!" said Alice, in dismay

'I didn't mean *my* poetry was like the Bible it isn't the least bit so, I'm sure," and she thought, half remorsefully, how very trivia most of it was, "but I thought you liked hymns. I've always noticed how you join in the singing."

Aunt Huldah went on, somewhat appeased by Alice's meekly apologetic tone, "Well, sakes alive! Can't a body sing Watts's hymns on Sundays without spendin' all the rest o' the week writin' drivellin' varses to the moon?" She paused an instant and eyed Alice sharply, and of course Alice blushed like the "guilty thing" that she was, but she ventured no reply to that most pertinent and awful question, so Aunt Huldah proceeded to clinch her argument.

"Now, Alice Leonard,"—there was really a most forcible and judicial effect produced by this frequent repetition of Alice's whole name, —"I've known considable many girls in my day, and I've always ben in the habit of no ticin' what I see, (so Alice thought!) and I always calkilate it's a bad sign when a girl be-

gins to curl her hair (Alice's hair was all in pretty little short curls) and go moonin' round, with a book of po'try in one hand, and a paper and pencil in the other! She'd a sight better darn her stockings, for they're 'most sure to need it!

"I've seen lots of girls begin in jest that way —human nater 's human nater—and I never knew one on 'em turn out well. They're jest good for nothin' to hum, in the first place, and then they git their heads full of hifalutin' romantic notions, and the first orgin-grinder that comes along—off they go! Then there's grief for themselves and all their relation', such as you've never dreamed of, Alice Leonard, though I calkilate you've dreamed consid'able more'n's good for you! There was Matildy Slater that I knew jest as well as I know you, and her folks set by her jest as your folks do by you,—though I don't see for my part what folks lets themselves git so bound up in their children for! Well, Matildy was sent to school, and her mother worked her fingers' ends off tryin' to give her a splendid

eddication, and then she got through—knew it all, I s'pose!—and come hum, and was as genteel and fixed up as some other folks." (here she looked severely at Alice,) "and then Matildy couldn't do nothin' but sit in the parlor and play on the pianny, or read love-stories; and putty soon she took to sittin' up all night to gaze at the moon—tryin' to look the man in the moon out o' countenance, mebbe—and sleepin' all day to make it up! She actually coaxed the editor of the *Mountain Eagle* to print some of her varses in the corner o' his paper—sich varses, too, all about stars and flowers and Spring and so on, and 'Lines to G. O. P.' and 'To S. T. R.'—everybody knew who she meant—and 'To the Moon'—I'd stop shinin', if I was the moon, rather'n be so insulted! I all'a's thought she paid the editor to git him to put 'em in.

"Well, bymeby along comes a peddler with more hair than brains, and Matildy ended herself by marryin' him. It jest killed her mother.

"Now I s'pose more'n as like as not I'm

wastin' words on you, Alice Leonard, but I've always set great store by you children, an' I thought I'd warn you in time. I know the signs," said Aunt Huldah, with the air of an oracle, "and you've got 'em all, if my name's Huldah Hapgood!"

"I'm ever so sorry, Aunt Huldah, to have you say such dreadful things about me," said Alice, with a tone of sorrowful resignation, but with uncontrollable fun dancing in her eyes, "still it's a satisfaction to know you think I'm worth scolding!

"And now, Aunt Huldah, mother sent me up to ask you if you could possibly come and sew for us next week. The boys are all to pieces, she says."

"You don't say they've run through them suits I made for 'em in the Fall?" asked Miss Hapgood.

"I'm afraid they have," said Alice; "it is eally shocking how they do go on! And father's overcoat wants facing and rebinding, and the pockets all round want fixing in all his coats, I guess, and nobody knows what else"

"Why don't you throw 'em into your machine and tell it to fix 'em?" asked Aunt Huldah, in bitter irony, for sewing-machines were her scorn!

"Oh, Aunt Huldah!"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know whether I can come or not. There's sights of work waiting for me."

"Of course there is, and always will be while you can do sewing so beautifully; but you will let other people wait a little, if you haven't promised them anything, and just come and help us one week now, can't you? Mother'll be so much obliged. She never can bear to let any one else touch the boys' clothes."

"Well, you can tell her like enough I'll come, but she needn't 'lot on it much—mebbe I can, and mebbe I can't." As Aunt Huldah never committed herself any more definitely than that, Alice thanked her with all due deference for even this faint encouragement, and rose to go.

"Good bye," said the model of industry,

scarcely raising her eyes from her work, at which she had been driving incessantly during the whole of her harangue to Alice, pointing all her remarks with quick little jerks of her thread, or the vigorous snips of her scissors.

"Good bye, and remember what I've told you."

"Yes, indeed I will," said Alice, laughing. "I'll remember it and you, Aunt Huldah, as long as I remember anything! Good bye," and away she ran down the narrow path, and out at the gate, then on towards home by the road that was so shady and beautiful in summer, but now desolate enough with wintry snows and great leafless oak trees, and she said to herself, with a little shiver, "I don't like winter, but I suppose it's good for me, and Aunt Huldah is very wintry, poor old soul!"

But before she reached home she had some very kind pleasant thoughts about both winter and the other severe but wholesome friend.

The good plain-dealing tailoress let her features all relax into the kindliest expression the

moment Alice had closed her door, and looking out from her lonely window, she followed the little maiden with a loving gaze till she was out of sight. Then coming back to her work with a sigh, she thought, "She is equal to her grandmother for good sense, and has her mother's sweet manners, but there's plenty to spoil her without my helping them. I've done my duty by her," and she tried to feel self-satisfied.

Yes, truly, if Alice makes shipwreck on the reef of Romance, Aunt Huldah's skirts will be clear!

Alice loved everything that was beautiful—so the woods and streams, the blue sky and the green grass, the birds and the flowers were all her dear familiar friends. Harry, too, was a great lover of Nature in his own fashion. They took a great deal of pleasure in rambling about together in the beautiful "oak-openings" that surrounded Clear Rapids. But it was only in sunny summer weather that Alice loved to be out of doors. In winter they used to have to coax or drive her away from the

pleasant fire-side. She would a great deal rather nestle into a corner of the sofa and read a poetical description of a snow-storm than to go out into a real one, while Harry had a genuine boyish love for a war of the elements. He used to be quite impatient with her, she was getting "so romantic and young ladyish," he thought, and he brought all his batteries of ridicule to bear upon her this winter, when they were fourteen. There truly was but little danger of Alice's growing morbidly romantic with Harry for a constant companion, and such a friend as Aunt Huldah proved herself once in a while!

The twin brother and sister counterbalanced each other charmingly. Alice coaxed Harry that winter into what proved a most enjoyable reading of "The Lady of the Lake;" and Harry made her read the newspapers faithfully, and keep up a lively interest in the details of the war, and all the current events of the day. So all things worked together for the good of this dear little poetess.

III.

ROSA AND ALICE.

ALICE was nearly twelve years old when little Rosa was born. It seemed as if her heart could hardly hold its happiness. If her fairy god-mamma, about whom she so often dreamed, had really come to her and given her the traditional privilege of three wishes, her very first one would have been for a baby sister. She had had her mind settled upon that point for years; and now she had her wish! The way it happened was a slight disappointment to Alice, though that was speedily swallowed up in her great joy. You see she had always planned that some time a

little speck of an old woman should suddenly appear before her, all dressed in silver grey with a gauzy little 'kerchief pinned across her breast, and another covering her snowy hair, while her trembling steps should be supported by a staff consisting of a single spear of thistle down; and then in a tremulous, sweet old voice, she would say, "I am the fairy god-mamma. Tell me what you wish for most, and it shall be yours." Then Alice would say, "Oh, a baby sister, by all means!" and immediately there would be an arrival from parts unknown, of a great, strong, but tender-looking genie, bearing in his arms a mysterious bundle of flannels and laces and delicate white drapery, which would be placed in her arms to be eagerly opened and then discovered to be the very darlingest baby girl alive!

But the way it really happened was, that on a certain frosty morning in October, Alice came down stairs, and being a little chilly, was glad to find a brisk fire in the parlor, so she drew up a low rocker by the stove and sat down a moment. The door stood open into

her mother's bedroom, and suddenly there came out from that room the ample figure of Mrs. Barlow, a person well known to Alice as one who had a wonderful fondness for very little babies, and who always cared for them most tenderly till they were a month or two old, when she would seem to lose her interest in them, and so would move on into some other family where there was one young enough to suit her tastes!

Well, Mrs. Barlow saw Alice sitting there and immediately withdrew into the bedroom again, only, however, to reappear bearing in her arms the long-coveted bundle of white draperies, which she placed in Alice's lap, all according to Alice's often-arranged programme! To be sure, Mrs. Barlow had so faint a resemblance to the ideal fairy godmamma, that even Alice's vigorous imagination couldn't make her seem like one, but the darling baby was all right and entirely satisfactory. That day Alice just abandoned herself to happiness. She hovered around the cradle in a sort of ecstasy of delight and ad-

miration. She was such a still, sensible little woman, that they let her stay in the darkened room, and even hold the tiny atom of humanity nearly all day. Of course it slept all the time, and scarcely stirred; but oh, it was such a wonderful new pleasure to put her face down and just touch lightly the velvety cheek, and feel the quick, warm breath! No tongue can tell, and no pen may write, all that our little dreamer dreamed—our airy castle-builder builded on that sweet Indian-summer day! One thing she fully decided upon, and that was, that if mamma's consent could be obtained, that precious baby should be named Rosamond, for she was certain there could not be in all the world such another lovely blossom. And sure enough mamma did let her have "her own sweet will" about the baby's name.

"Of course, mamma," Alice said, "we would call her Margaret, for you, if my name were not Alice Margaret, but since she can't be your namesake, there's nobody else in the world that's half good enough to give her a

name, I know! Please do let us name her Rosamond!"

"Well, my darling," the mother said, in reply, "of course we must consult papa about it, but if I let you name her, will you be her god-mamma?—her sponsor, as the Episcopalians call the one who promises at a little child's christening to watch over and love it, and try to lead it in the right way?"

"Indeed I will, mamma, indeed I will!" cried Alice earnestly. and she never forgot her promise.

The little Rosamond proved a perfect treasure—a lovely winsome little thing, all dimples and smiles and cunning baby-ways, with just enough naughtiness about her to show that she was

> "A creature not too bright and good
> For human nature's daily food."

Alice never wearied of her. She transferred to her all the hoards of love she had hitherto lavished on her dollies. How fortunate that love is not like gold! The more we lavish, the

more we hoard! "Giving doth not impoverish." It answers perfectly the riddle in the Pilgrim's Progress that was propounded by old Honest:

> "A man there was, though some do count him mad,
> The more he cast away, the more he had."

The whole family joined in paying tribute to the pretty little queen, and she accepted it with that charming unconsciousness of getting any more than her dues, which is one of the graces of infancy, but which sometimes we find rather disagreeable later in life. She was a darling now, though, and why need we be croaking about the future? Her eyes were of the bluest and her cheeks of the rosiest hue, and her hair was like liquid gold! Then she had such a sunny temper, was so easily pleased, and was so surpassingly fond of being "cuddled up cosy," it was no wonder they all bowed to her sceptre!

She was all the more appreciated because she was such a delightful contrast to what Will was when he was "the baby," five or six

years before. Such a baby as he was! The memory of it can never be erased from the family books. His conduct was absolutely terrific, and will become a matter of tradition, "to point a moral or adorn a tale!" for the benefit of mothers yet to be. It is said that his black eyes were never known to stay closed for fifteen consecutive minutes till he was two years old! His mother used to be as charitable and sympathizing as mothers are bound to be. She tried to think—when he screamed every moment, by day and by night, that he was not walked with or tossed, and also the greater part of the time when he was receiving these soothing attentions—that the dear baby was sick; but his excellent appetite and steady growth made it very largely a matter of faith. As to teething, it's bad enough, no doubt, but whoever heard of a baby whose teeth never gave it one hour's peace from year's end to year's end! It is my firm opinion that that child cried because he couldn't tire himself out in any other way!

But Rosa fortunately was of another mind, and they perceived the difference with thankful hearts.

Alice now formally and forever put away her long-cherished dollies, banishing some of them to a packing box in the garret, there to await Rosa's development of the maternal instinct; while others were given to little girl friends. She celebrated the event with a poem, of course. Shall I copy it for the benefit of my little girl readers?

"A FAREWELL TO MY DOLLIES.

"Dear dollies, if you only knew the joyful news to-day,
There is not one among you all but that would gladly say:
'There is no further need for us, our mission here is done,
The sweetest baby opes its eyes that ever saw the sun!'
So carefully and tenderly, my children ever dear,
I'll give to you another home, nor ever have a fear,
But that you'll have a charming time when left all by yourselves,
As happy as the fairies, and as merry as the elves.
So good bye little Violet! Good-bye my precious Nell!
My darling Madge, my Josephine, my pretty Claribell!

My eyes are misty with my tears, my heart is like a knell,
As lovingly I lay you down and bid you all farewell!"

Alice revived her knowledge of Mother Goose for the baby's benefit, and so familiarized her with those venerable rhymes, that she could "Pat a cake," and put out her fat little feet to hear, "Shoe the colt, shoe the colt!" at a surprisingly early age. That is an indispensable part of every properly-trained baby's education, isn't it?

There are some modern rhymes, which will never rival the old ones for popularity, I suppose, but which are ever so much prettier, that were said over and over by Alice to the little Rosa. Her toes were counted over at least twice a day, to the tune of

"One is a lady that sits in the sun,
Two is a lily, and three is a nun,"

and her fingers were brought forward to the rhyme,

"Ten little blackbirds sitting in a line,
One flew away and then there were nine.

But it was in lullabies that Alice revelled. Her stock of them was already extensive, but it daily enlarged, shaping itself to her needs out of her own abundant fancies. They were quite irresistible to Rosa, and when Alice came in from school, and found her mother vainly rocking the baby, she would sit down and take her in her arms, and sing, "Sleep, baby, sleep! The bright stars are the sheep," or one of her own sweet songs:

"Sleep little Rose, sleep little Rose,
Dewy and fair your namesake grows
By folding her petals in soft repose;
Sleep little floweret, our own sweet Rose!"

Who wouldn't have gone to sleep? I m sure I would, if I didn't keep awake on purpose to listen!

So the Rose-bud grew and thrived, and was almost two years old, when she had an adventure. Most babies do. But this one had been so tenderly nurtured, there had been so many to watch her toddling steps, so many to say, 'Take care," and to take care, that really

nothing worth speaking of had ever happened to her. She had never pulled the tea-pot over on to herself, or even tumbled out of bed! I doubt if she ever had pricked her finger or stubbed her toe! She was altogether too well taken care of; it is wholesome for all of us to get some bumps and scratches; it teach us to look out for the corners, and they are so plenty, O, so plenty! in this world of ours.

Still Rosa did manage to have an adventure. Alice loved to take her up into her own room and keep her there for hours. She was such a cheerful little companion, so full of bright little questions, and cunning remarks, all in her own quaint baby lingo that nobody could understand out of the house, but which had become the family language to a great extent. Who can help catching the tricks of such a dear little, lisping, crooked-talking tongue? Alice would give her some box of old trumpery, and she would plump herself down on the carpet any where, and proceed to examine things with the utmost interest and curiosity. Or she would give her an

old picture book, or one of her own old dollies, and fairly renew her youth (so long past!) in her baby sister's play.

So she took her up-stairs one warm summer morning, and prepared for a good time. In the first place, she tossed her on to the unmade bed and had a grand frolic with her, covering her up and pretending to have a great search for her, playing bo-peep with her among the pillows; and finally, pinning a little red scarf about her head, played Red Riding-hood and the Wolf. When the wolf got ready to banquet on the hapless little Rose lying there, with such appealing big blue eyes, and the little moist curls peeping out from under the hood, of course he concluded to "devour her with kisses" instead; and the tragedy became the jolliest kind of comedy. Then Alice took her out of bed, and gave her a dusting cloth, and let her play dust the furniture, which she did with great vigor, while Alice made the bed and put things to rights. Then she perched Rosa up on a chair, and coaxed her to sit still while she brushed and combed

and recurled her tumbled hair, promising to hold her up to the mirror, and let her have a long look at herself, as a reward for her good behavior. So having finished the curling process, Alice stood her little pet up on the table before the mirror, and let her survey her lovely little self. It was a beautiful picture; I wish it could have been transferred to canvass; the two sweet faces so unlike and so like. Alice held her little sister carefully, but her thoughts went straying off into revery-land. "I wonder how she will look when she is as old as I am," she thought, and then she fell to telling Rosa's fortune, which was always one of her favorite employments. "She will look in this mirror twenty years from now, and will see a tall, beautiful lady, in blue silk, with pearls in her hair, and about her neck, and——"

"Ah, what nice times!" said Mrs. Leonard, looking at the door. "You have shut the window, I see; that is right. I'm always afraid of an open chamber window when there is a child about. You need the door open for air, I suppose, this warm morning, but be

careful not to let Rosa stray out alone;" and then she went away, leaving them to their own pleasant devices.

But Alice, gazing into the depths of the glass, lost all the latter part of her mother's remark. She saw a moving series of pictures, in which Rosa was the central figure, and her senses were locked to everything else.

Pretty soon, however, the little one tired of looking even at herself, and Alice lifted her to the floor, and gave her a box of paper dollies to play with. Then having thus established Rosa, she sat down herself to rest a few moments, and renew her acquaintance with her darling friend, Ellen Montgomery, who lived as we all know, in "The Wide, Wide World."

She opened it in a very interesting place, and was soon lost in the delightful story. Rosa kept chatting away to her, and Alice would say, "Yes, dear," without the slightest idea to what she was replying. Pretty soon Rosa got tired of one set of playthings, and went roaming about the room, ever and anon

appealing to Alice with some question or remark, and always getting the invariable and not always satisfactory reply, "Yes, dear." So she concluded she would change her location, and see if she could get more attention.

"Me do see mamma," she said, but Alice did not reply. "Me do see mamma," she repeated.

"Yes, dear," said Alice, with her thoughts all intent on her story.

So Rosa thought that was sufficient permission, and started for the stairs. Alice did not notice her absence for just a moment, then there was a smothered scream, a horrible rolling, bumping noise, a crash, and silence! Alice's heart gave one great throb, and she sprang to her feet, with the whole dreadful truth flashing through her mind. She was at the foot of the stairs, with Rosa in her arms in a second, shocked beyond all expression, and with a face as blanched as that of the little limp senseless form, she held towards her mother in mute despair!

Then there was the usual wild excitement

Alice bringing camphor and ammonia, and Johanna crossing herself, and running to and fro with all sorts of things that were not wanted, the broom and dust-pan for instance.

Mrs. Leonard tried to be calm, and apply the needed remedies, but it was some moments before the dear blue eyes opened slowly, and the thoughts came wandering back from that dim border-land of insensibility. Meanwhile Harry had run for the doctor, and Will, in breathless haste, for his father, whom he frightened nearly out of his senses, with his vague report that "Rosa was killed just as dead as she could be!" Poor Alice who had not been able to utter a sound, knelt down beside her darling sister, and at the first sign of returning life said, "Oh, thank God!" and burst into a flood of tears. Rosa's eye looked bright and natural in a few moments, but she moaned with pain, and kept saying, "Mamma, mamma!" in the most pitiful way.

"Where is mamma's darling hurt?" Mrs Leonard kept asking; but the little one could not locate her distress. Then the mother felt

tenderly of the small bones, so hidden away in baby fatness, that she could scarcely trace them—arms and legs and ribs; trembling with fear lest she should find one broken; but she could not make any discoveries. "Oh, if her back is only safe!" she said, her memory recalling so many instances of life-long suffering from spinal disease, brought on by just such injuries.

Alice shuddered with undefined terror.

It seemed an hour before the doctor and Mr. Leonard came running in together, yet it was really but a few moments. How they all watched the doctor's cool, quiet, professional glance! How their hearts lightened with his kind, cheerful words!

"Ah, those are very bright-looking little eyes! I guess her head is all right, at least, Mrs. Leonard."

It took a good deal of coaxing to get the little sufferer to allow the good doctor to pursue his investigations, for she had hitherto dwelt in blissful ignorance of doctors and medicines. A warm bath and a cup of sage

tea had been the utmost extent of her medical experiences. But the doctor was gentle and wise, and Alice came forward, with her usual tact, to have *her* bones examined; and so poor little Rosa was won over; but her quivering, drooping lip, and tearful eyes were very touching. When the doctor's firm touch ran across her collar-bone, there was a sudden shrinking and a sharp cry. "Ah, here is the trouble," he said. "Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Leonard, it is only her collar-bone that is fractured; it is not, in the least, dangerous, only somewhat painful; but her bones are soft and young, fortunately; it will heal very rapidly. So before they could fairly take a realizing sense of what seemed a dreadful hurt—a broken bone!—their fears were quieted.

"Can you tell if her back is uninjured?" the mother asked, almost dreading to allude to the possibility of such a hurt.

"Not with positive certainty," he answered, "but it is not best to distress yourself on that score. One broken bone will do for this morning," he added, smiling.

Then they tried to be cheerful, and Alice whose heart was lighter, of course, but still heavy enough, and who was so faint and trembling she could scarcely walk, made a desperate effort to be womanly and useful. She brought bandages, and helped divert Rosa while the mother gently bared the beautiful little plump neck and arms, so that the doctor could place the bone in the right position, and then bandage one arm down to her side so that the bone might heal undisturbed.

"Now, you will have to watch her very carefully for a few days till the ends unite—a fall or any sudden motion or jar might displace them," said the physician; and then he congratulated them on its being no worse an accident, and bade them good morning.

After he was gone, Alice leaned back on the sofa, as white and wan as Rosa herself, or even more so. Her father brought her a glass of water, and then, for the first time, he asked, "How did it happen, mamma?" But before Mrs. Leonard could reply, Alice's arms were about his neck, and her face hidden on his

shoulder, while, between her sobs, she told him the story.

"She was playing so nicely," she said, "and I was reading, and I forgot that the door was open, and the stairs so near, and then the next thing I knew, she fell. Oh, father, it was all my fault—all my fault!"

The father soothed her with kind, reassuring words. "You will be more careful hereafter, my dear," he said. "Let us thank God that this seems to be no worse a hurt."

Afterwards they talked more about it, and the mother said, "Don't you know, Alice, my last charge to you was to be careful about the open door?"

"Oh, mother, I didn't hear you at all," said Alice, "but I knew I ought to be careful about it, of course, and I meant to be. It was the story that drove it out of my mind."

"Me said, 'Do see mamma,'" added Rosa who was feeling easier and more talkative "Me said, 'Do see mamma'; Alice said *''es.'*"

"Did I, you poor darling?" said Alice, glad

to hear the dear little voice again, even if every word was to her condemnation. "Naughty Alice didn't hear one word you said! What shall Alice do to her bad, bad ears!" But, to her mother, she said, "I feel as if I never wanted to see a story-book again!"

"That would be like Cain's punishment—greater than you could bear,' I fear," said Mrs Leonard. "But I wish you could learn not to be so utterly absorbed in your stories."

Then they decided that Rosa must be watched every moment till the broken bone was well again, and Alice claimed the privilege of being "head nurse." She said, by way of quotation, that it was "her bounden duty, as well as her reasonable service!" and she would not be denied. Her mother let her share her vigils for the two or three nights when they thought it best to keep watch, lest some sudden turn of the uneasy little sleeper might hinder the healing process; and never was there a more alert watcher. I assure you she *heard* admirably. Not a sigh escaped

Rosa's lips, nor was there a movement of hand or foot but that Alice was instantly ready, with gentle hand, to check the restless motion, and protect the injured bone. And all day long she led the little one carefully about, lest her foot might trip, or held her in her lap, and told her the most pain-annihilating stories.

Rosa could not bear a dress for a few days, but had a little shawl pinned about her plump shoulders, which gave her the quaintest and most infirm appearance. Then she would say so plaintively, "Me boke me bones!" that the effect was quite irresistible. It was generally conceded that she was the very sweetest and most interesting and docile little invalid that ever was! Alice considered it a real privilege to take care of her, and, in the depth of her contrition and self-abasement, even taught her to say, when any one asked her how she came to fall, "Tause Alice didn't hear."

But it was a very brief affair. In a single week the bandage was removed, and the healthy, young bone seemed to have com-

pletely meaded itself. As to her straight little spinal column, it had escaped entirely unharmed.

That was Rosa's last adventure.

IV.

ALICE'S SABBATH AFTERNOONS.

MR. LEONARD was a most affectionate father, and a very impartial one in all his treatment of his children; but if the heart is really the seat of our affections, I think that right in the core of his heart was a little place that Alice alone occupied! She was a very lovable little girl, in the first place—a favorite with every member of the household; but she swayed her father's heart, in part, because they had such sympathetic, congenial natures She seemed, to the father, like a soft echo of his own spirit. Her wealth of imagination, and her love for all beautiful things were akin

to his own, and even her visionary, absorbed way, he recognized as the very one which had afflicted his own boyhood.

He used to call her his "prairie flower;" but she seemed far more like one of the harebells that hang tremulous on the cliffs of the granite hills. She was a real little mountain maid, with a love of beautiful scenery as intense as if she had always had "rock and tree and flowing water" spread out before her, when truly they existed to her, as yet, only in in her "mind's eye." He used to take her on his knee and talk to her about the white hills of New Hampshire—of crags and precipices, and snow-capped summits—of dancing brooks and leaping waterfalls—till her blue eyes shone and her cheeks glowed with delight. So the little western maiden grew up with visions of her father's native land floating through her dreams.

Her poetic nature, too, was a strong bond of union between them. She always found one charmed listener to her pretty songs—one kind critic who did not laugh at the crudest

work of the sweet dreamer; but made kind suggestions, and pointed out defects, with so many intermingled words of commendation, that Alice's sensitive spirit was never wounded. Yet there can be no doubt that she belonged to what the old Latin author calls "the sensitive race of poets."

But there was very little time when Alice and her father could talk together. A few hurried words before breakfast, perhaps, or a snatch of conversation at dinner or tea; but usually these times of family gathering were wholly taken up with general talk. Mr. Leonard really had no time to spend with his family, except the blessed Sabbath days; and from her very babyhood, Alice was in the habit of watching and longing for Sunday. When she was a year or two old, she knew it as the day when papa stayed at home most of the time, and carried her round on his shoulder; or let her sit on his knee and look at the pictures in the big family bible, telling her the wonderful stories that they illustrated, especially the one dearer than all the rest, "the sweet story of

old." Then as she grew older, when church, and Sabbath-school, and dinner were over there was still left the highly-prized Sabbath afternoon, when Mr. Leonard sat in his easy chair, or lay on the sofa, and Alice could just devote herself to him. She did not mean to monopolize him, but her mother used often to tell her that it almost amounted to that. Harry would be reading in some very comfortable attitude, for Harry was a young Sybarite, always enjoying all the luxuries he could, and lounging was one of them. Mrs. Leonard would frequently wish to spend a good deal of the afternoon with the younger children reading to them, or talking with them; or perhaps, would herself sit down in a rocking-chair and enjoy an hour or two of quiet reading, so that Alice was quite at liberty to get a generous portion of her father's time and attention.

One of her devices, and his delights, consisted in her arming herself with a comb and brush, and spending an hour in "fussing with papa's hair." She would brush it all one

way, and then another—part it first on one side, then the other, then in the middle, and stand off with her head a little on one side to see the effect.

"You look like one of the twelve Apostles, papa," she cried out once, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm, after parting his hair in this apostolic way, "like the beloved John!"

Mr. Leonard laughed merrily. "To think of a hurried, worried, dusty old miller of the nineteenth century, looking like that peaceful Galilean fisherman!" he said.

"Well, you may laugh, but you do for all that," persisted Alice. "I wonder if he had any little girl like me. How I would like to know about his home! Why doesn't the Bible tell us something about such things, father?"

"The Bible only tells us what we need to know, Alice. It was not written to gratify our curiosity, or to entertain us with pictures of Jewish life. Here and there is some little detail given, but always to give force to some great truth, or, perhaps, to make the narra-

tive more credible. John had a home we know, for it was to his tender care Jesus confided his mother."

"Yes, father, I remember; and that makes me think he must have had a happy home, where it was very pleasant for her to be, or else she would have lived with some of her own children. But O, father, if we could just read all about that home, and hear some of their talk about Jesus, how much more real it would seem to us! I can hardly ever think of the disciples as common men, with homes and wives and children. Do you, father?"

"No, my dear, I hardly ever do, and, perhaps, it is best we should not have our minds diverted from their public life, as connected with that of the Saviour. That is the one great fact of their lives; they were the followers of Christ."

But it was not easy ever to check the flow of Alice's fancy, so she went on talking, while she kept her fingers busy with her father's hair.

"How they must have enjoyed having that

.ovely sad mother of Christ's live with them · I think she must have looked just like that beautiful painting we saw at the gallery in Benton, father. What was it called?"

"The Mater Dolorosa?"

"Yes, that was it, but I would not want her to always look so sorrowful. I hope she sometimes felt very happy to think of all her dear son had done before he died, and what a blessing to the world his death was. But how I would have loved to sit at her feet, and have her tell me all about the childhood of Jesus! Just think, father, all that we know of his childhood is that one little story of his staying in Jerusalem, and talking with the learned men in the temple!"

"Yes, Alice, but that one story has more meaning than whole chapters of details might have that were not so significant. You are on dangerous ground, my dear. It is not best to speculate about what is not revealed. Let us be very thankful for what we have, and rest assured that all that is needful is told us. Have you finished learning H. K. White's hymn?"

"Yes, father," and she repeated with great correctness, and evident appreciation, the beautiful hymn, beginning "When marshalled on the mighty plain."

When she had finished the recitation, she said eagerly, "O, father, I found such a lovely hymn the other day, in a volume of 'Hymns for Mothers and Children,' that Lily Grover lent me, and this hymn about the Star of Bethlehem reminds me of it. You will like it so much, father;" and she brought the book, and sat down beside him. Then she found, and read with great beauty, the Christmas hymn of Alfred Dornett.

Harry had been lying on the sofa reading, but before she had finished the first verse—

"It was the calm and silent night!
Seven hundred years and fifty-three
Had Rome been growing up to might,
And now was queen of land and sea!"—

he was sitting up and giving his whole attention to the poem. How that grand refrain at the end of each verse—

"In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!"—

thrilled his heart! They all felt the power of the description. They could hear the roll of the Roman senator's chariot, and could see the weary peasant pause to wonder at the light from the stable-door! And, when she closed the reading, it seemed almost as if they were standing by the stable where lay

"The peaceful Prince of earth and heaven,—
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!"

Alice paused a moment, and Harry said—"That is what I call poetry! Is there anything more like that in the book?"

"It is majestic," Mr. Leonard said. "I am glad my little daughter appreciates such poetry, and you, too, Harry. We will remember and read that next Christmas, won't we?"

"Now read Mary Howitt's exquisite little story my dear," Mrs. Leonard said, coming in

and sitting down on the sofa by Harry. "The one about the little girl reading the Bible in Wickliff's days."

"Yes, mother, I have it right here;" and she read the beautifully-told story.

When she came to the two lines—

> "The child looked upward from her book,
> Like one but just awake!"

she looked up at her mother with a bright, quick glance, that seemed to say, "I'm not the only child that has had to be woke up when she was reading.

When Alice's sweet voice paused at the end of the story, they all expressed their pleasure again, and her father added, "You realize now, don't you, Alice, how thankful we should be that we can have that blessed Gospel to read undisturbed? No 'king to make a law, that it shall not be read'—no holy abbot to call it 'fearful heresy.' We do not need to be disturbed because there is no more of it merely to gratify our curiosity."

"No, indeed, father," Alice said; "but I have still more to read to you, if you would like to hear."

They assured her they would. Reading aloud was one of her greatest gifts—her chief accomplishment; and I think it gave her friends vastly more pleasure than if she had been a wonderful musician, and it had been such an inexpensive acquisition. It had not cost her father five hundred dollars, nor her mother years of extra effort. Alice read aloud beautifully, because, in the first place, she understood perfectly what she read, and so brought out the little shades of meaning; and, in the second place, because she had a sweet voice, and was entirely natural about her reading, as she was about everything else. She was but fourteen years old at this time, and had never heard any distinguished elocutionists. Perhaps it was just as well as if she had, for now she was original in her manner, and had a way of reading just as she talked, simply and unaffectedly, without a trace of the theatrical style, which ruins so much reading

Mrs. Leonard had trained the children in this, so that, as Mr. Grover, their teacher, said, "she had left nothing for him to do in that line; he rather thought they read better than he did!" Verily, there is no training like a mother's—so thorough, so unwearied!

So Alice went on to read "The Building of the House," by Charles Mackay—

> "Fit in its strength to stand sublime
> For seventy years of mortal time,"

which was duly admired; and then she passed the book over to Harry, for him to read James Russell Lowell's "Heritage." Harry's voice was not quite so flexible as Alice's, but he hac the same distinct articulation and natural manner; and he read the forcible manly poem as if he appreciated the sentiments. For although he had such a natural liking for the heritage of the rich man's son, so far as "soft white hands," and "dainty fare" is concerned, yet he was too sensible not to know the value of the

"Content that from employment springs,
A heart that in his labor sings;"

and also of

"A patience learned of being poor,
Courage if sorrow come to bear it;"

and when he said of these,

"A heritage, it seems to me,
A king might wish to hold in fee,"

his heart responded to the brave thought of the poet. Then, when he came to the last noble verse,

"Both, heirs to some six feet of sod,
Are equal in the earth at last;
Both, children of the same dear God,
Prove title to your heirship vast
By record of a well-filled past;
A heritage it seems to me,
Well worth a life to hold in fee;"

he felt the inspiring, elevating power of the poem, almost as much as if he had Alice's in

tense fondness for poetry. "Isn't it grand, father?" he said.

"Indeed it is, my boy," said Mr. Leonard, and then he turned to Mrs. Leonard, and said, 'We must have this book, Margaret, mustn't we?"

"I would like it very much," she answered; 'there are so many exquisite poems—some of them suited even to little Rosa's tastes and comprehension."

So Mr. Leonard took down on his pocket memorandum book the name of the publishers, and gladdened Alice's heart with a promise to write for it in the morning. Mr. Leonard had never thought that he could afford to smoke cigars, or indulge in very expensive garments or furniture, but it was noticeable that he could always afford to buy any desirable book that fell in his way!

Then Mrs. Leonard gathered the children all around her by taking the book in her hands; and she read in her sweet expressive way many of the choicest selections. Some of them they were pleased to recognize as old

favorites, while the others, they were all sure, would henceforth be ranked among that number.

No Sabbath afternoon was complete to Alice, or indeed to any of them, without the "sing," as they called it, and so now, on this particular one, which I am telling you about, as a sample of those happy days, she said, when her mother closed the book, in the gathering twilight, "Now come to the piano, mother," which the mother was always ready to do. Her fingers had lost some of their old facile, dexterous art, but she still played with ease and pleasure accompaniments to their household singing. So they sung now some of the grand old hymns—"Rock of Ages," "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah!" and "Jesus, I my cross have taken." Then some Sabbath-school hymns,—"Great Shepherd of the Sheep," "Rest for the Weary," and, fo. the benefit of the younger ones, who liked so much the lively repetitions, "I have a Father in the promised land." Afterwards Mrs. Leonard and Alice sang together, "From the

recesses of a lowly spirit," and "Nearer my God to Thee."

Then it was tea-time, and then Rosa's bed-time, and the bell was ringing for the evening service. Alice gave a little sigh of satisfaction as she gathered up the scattered books and closed the piano. "What a nice time we have had, father," she said; "Sundays are my red-letter days."

"They surely are to me, my dear," he said, taking her on his knee in his fond, fatherly way, "but I'm not in the least disposed to consider it very meritorious in myself to love the dear, restful day, when I can have you all about me and enjoy the things which I like above all others—my little daughter's reading, for instance, to say nothing of her talking!"

But though Alice loved poetry so well, and so often made its reading or recitation the main part of her Sabbath afternoon visits with her father, yet quite frequently it was some unpoetical, or at any rate unrhymed book that made the subject of their talk. There was the "Pilgrim's Progress," for instance. It always

had a wonderful charm for Alice When she was a little child and did not quite understand its true meaning, she still found a weird fascination in its details of giants and lions, and the "foul fiend Apollyon." Christian, with the "great burthen upon his back," fleeing away from his wife and children, with his fingers in his ears, and crying, "Life! Life! Eternal Life!" was a picture that was stamped indelibly on her childish mind. She knew, too, just how the Interpreter looked; and those gentle and wise damsels, Prudence and Piety and Charity, who dwelt in the house built by the Lord of the Hill, did she not know them well? In after years, when her mother's explanations, and her own discernment had made the meaning of the great Allegory quite plain to her, it retained its charm, and she would get down the large illustrated volume almost every Sunday, either for her own benefit or that of the other children, and enjoy anew the fascinating story.

On one of these occasions she had been spending an hour helping Johnny and Will to

a better comprehension of the dream and its interpretation. The little fellows had the book spread open on the dining-room table, and were enjoying the pictures, and talking over their ideas about them—rather crude and fantastic Will's were, at least; and so Alice had come and stood behind them, explaining the quaint language and the still more obscure symbols. She had quite a knack at simplifying, and the boys always liked to have her help. There was only one trouble—she got to reading to herself almost invariably! "What does this mean, Alice?" perhaps Johnny would say. But Alice's eye would be riveted on the opposite page, and she would say—"Just let me read a little and I'll tell you." So Johnny would patiently wait, but find that Alice was getting deeper and deeper into the story, and, quite disgusted, would turn the book over to her entirely. But this Sabbath afternoon, about which I am writing, Alice had devoted a whole hour to her younger brothers, unselfishly refraining from reading only as much as was needful to her explanation. They were

reading about the trial of Christian and Faithful at Vanity Fair; and Alice explained very clearly how Vanity Fair meant the wicked world, and how the names of the people indicated their characters; and then the death of Faithful, at their cruel hands, was the martyrdom which had been the fate of many a faithful follower of Christ. But there came up a question to her own mind while she was talking, that she carried to her father, after she had told the boys all they cared to have her.

"Father," she said, "Faithful didn't have to cross the river like the other pilgrims to get to the heavenly city, did he?"

"No," said Mr. Leonard; "Bunyan has represented him as being carried to the celestial gate from the martyr's stake, though it is expressly said, I believe, 'after his adversaries had despatched him;' so that he is not said to have been translated, like Enoch and Elijah. In an allegory, like Bunyan's, it was almost impossible to make the figures all perfectly harmonious. We may explain it, per-

haps, by saying that the river which all must cross represents natural death."

"Yes; but, father, there were people in the story who were all the time coming to a dreadful end in some other way. There was poor Vain-Confidence, who was dashed in pieces in a deep pit in By-path Meadow."

"That is true; but that must mean that their Christian profession or hope was destroyed—not their mortal lives. I don't suppose it would cause actual death to the most vain-glorious professor of religion to get astray in some religious by-path! We must not be on the look-out for little inconsistencies in the dream, my dear, for they are unavoidable. The only marvel is that there are so few."

"That is true, father. All I wanted to know was if you knew any way of reconciling these things. I'm sure I don't mean to find any fault with that dear, old book. I never can open it anywhere but I want to go right on reading. I was reading to-day about the land of Beulah, and the crossing of the river

by Christian and Hopeful, and it never seemed to me half so beautiful before."

"I always think so myself, with each new reading," said her father. "Perhaps it is because so much of it is told in the very words of the Bible—the blessed words of inspiration, that never grow old or lose their beauty."

"I could not help thinking, father, how delightful it would be if our friends could go across the river attended by shining ones, and we could see or hear or know something about it. If we could hear the trumpets and the bells, and see them let in at the golden gates! It would take away all the dread of dying one's self, or of having our friends die;" and Alice drew close to her father and shivered, as if the shadow of death fell across her young heart heavily. The dark shadow, which had never clouded their happy home, but which, she knew, must one day come.

"It is not best, my daughter, for us to think longingly of that which God, in his providence, has denied us. We had better try to see, if

we can, some good results from the denial, and trust all the rest to Him. By all means, use all the light we have or can obtain, either from His written or unwritten Word; but, farther than that, be content to exercise our faith. Perhaps if death were made so beautiful and attractive, we should not care enough for life, we should be in such haste to reach the glorious end. There is a great deal of needful work to be done here. I suppose our whole lives are one great preparatory school.

"'The trivial round, the common task,
Furnishes all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves—a road
To daily bring us nearer God.'

The long-tried patience, the severely-taxed faith are all needful, or they would not be a part of every one's life. It is the only explanation there is, my dear, to the

"'burden and the mystery
Of all this unintelligible world'"

So Alice found sympathy and comfort where she never failed to find it.

How easy it is for the child of such a father to have loving confidence in the Heavenly Father!

V.

JOHNNY.

JOHNNY LEONARD was a boy by himself. In old times, when children were spelling, they were taught, whenever they came to a vowel, to say "by itself," directly after it. One of our modern boys or girls would hardly know how to go to work in an old-fashioned spelling-class. Well, Johnny was like one of those separate and distinct vowels, which was entirely capable of taking care of itself. He was Johnny, by himself, Johnny!

Family traits are usually very prominent affairs. The children of one household almost invariably have a general resemblance in face

and form, in character and manner—even in speech and gait. It is very queer sometimes to see these little points showing themselves even "to the third and fourth generation!"

But Johnny started out on a new pattern. He did not look like any one of his brothers and sisters, or like his father or mother. He had great grey eyes, and features that were anything but a sculptor's ideal. Visitors used to say, a little sympathizingly, to his mother, when he was a baby, that they "presumed he would improve"—there certainly was room for it! And the mother kissed the quiet, plain-looking little fellow, and knew that he looked very good to her, however he might appear to less loving critics. Still she knew also that he had by no means a beautiful face, and hoped that it would indeed improve with time. I am sorry to say they were all disappointed. Johnny's irregular features proved an abiding gift from Dame Nature, who had been so lavish to Harry and Alice in quite an opposite way.

But there is a charming old proverb which

has comforted many a poor, ill-favored individual, and which affirms that, "Handsome is that handsome does." According to that regulation, Johnny was what Johanna used to call "a born beauty." He was the best mannered baby you ever saw—taking his morning bath with a cool, philosophical air; staying where he was put, whether on the floor or the bed, kicking his sturdy little legs up in the air, and sucking his fat fist in as contented a way as if his looks were of no account whatever; sitting tied in a high chair by a table, playing with a spoon and a tin-pan, or by the window watching a fly, just as long as they wanted him to; having long, undisturbed naps in the day time, and at night sleeping quietly in the most approved style. Oh, Johnny was a perfectly beautiful baby!

This was a beauty that wore well, too. It was a great deal more than "skin deep." As he grew out of babyhood, this good gift of an even, healthy organization, mental and bodily, remained unchanged. His broad, honest face, with its contemplative grey eyes and promi-

nent forehead, never changed much from its original mould. What a grave young philosopher he was! Almost always serious and always thinking. I suppose we all of us keep up some sort of a mental process, but Johnny was almost always thinking definitely and to some purpose. He was not much of a questioner, because he preferred to think things out for himself; but when he made up his mind to ask a question, I assure you he wanted an answer, and persisted till he got one. If any one labored under the delusion that by saying, "Wait a while and I'll tell you," or, "Don't bother me," or, "What do you want to know for?" he was going to avoid giving Johnny an answer, he found himself very much mistaken! Johnny was the very boy to pursue an investigation under difficulties; they only whetted his appetite for knowledge. He had a vast stock of patience, was never in a hurry, and so took ample time always to follow up his inquiries. They used to make a great deal of fun of him. It was quite irresistible, this solemn way of stopping to look into

things at all times and places imaginable, but the shafts of wit went harmlessly over his head; he either didn't hear or didn't understand; it did not make much difference which! There was nothing he took such an intense interest in, however, as in mechanics. Long before he knew anything about the names of the mechanical powers, he was entirely familiar with their practical use. It was all very well to laugh at him, but if Johnny had been a laughing character himself and had followed the adage, "Let him laugh who wins," he would have very often been able to do quite as much laughing as any of them. For if he and Harry set out to do anything together, Johnny was sure to suggest some labor-saving device. If there was a heavy market-basket to be brought home, it was Johnny who would propose a lever, in the way of a stick put through the handle; or if there was a bag of flour to be lifted into the wagon, it was Johnny that thought of the helpful board upon which to slide it in and out, though he had never heard of an inclined plane.

Machinery of all kinds was like a living thing to Johnny. I think he lavished quite as much tenderness on it as he did on the animal creation, and I am rather of the opinion that he prized his father's mill considerably above the men who were employed in it! He was such a queer little fellow though—so cool and undemonstrative that no one ever knew just what the state of his affections was! Harry and Alice used often to doubt whether he cared for them in the least, but his mother never had any doubts whatever about it; it takes mothers to know what is in little boys' heads and hearts! Johnny's mother knew that there was a tender spot in his heart for her at least.

People generally liked Johnny; he was so quiet and inoffensive, so sensible and honest, but perhaps they didn't have that warm affection for him that they would have had if they could have been sure that he liked them back again! We are apt all of us to keep our books pretty carefully in that respect, and give love for love. Still Johnny had a great many

friends, in the common acceptation of the term, and after his peculiar tastes were understood, every one took an interest in his pursuits, and would often help him along with a present. He had wind-mills, and tops of various patterns, and a little toy steam engine, that could be wound up and made to travel quite across the floor! His Uncle Harold once made him perfectly happy with a tool-chest, nicely furnished, and every Christmas added somewhat to his stores. But, like all other children, the playthings which he enjoyed the most were those that he had invented or made himself, and next to those ranked the ones he had seen made, and so knew all about. Dear to his heart was the little wind-mill which he had made out of a square piece of paper, cut and pinned in such a way that a breath of air would set it whirling. It was when he was five years old, and he thought himself of the plan of setting it up over the stove, so that the current of hot air should keep it flying. He would sit and watch it until his eyes blinked very much as if he was sleepy!

He liked tops of his own make, whittled out of empty spools, a good deal better than his patent "gyrator."

Of course he used to keep his treasures with the most jealous care. When he was little he kept his mother on an incessant watch, lest the reckless Harry, or the unconscious Alice, or—worst enemy of all—the mischievous Will, should commit some depredations on his precious personal property. But she found it a very severe tax to be continually serving on a vigilance committee, and besides, do the best she could, there would be so much tresspassing, she finally refused to serve, and Johnny had to shirk for himself. He had an old trunk, an heir-loom in the family, covered with skin of some kind, tanned with the hair on, and ornamented with a profusion of brass-headed nails. Mr. Leonard decided it should be Johnny's, because he had so many more valuables than the other boys; if it had been Will's, he would have built a fire in it within a week! but Johnny bought a new lock with his own pocket money, and put it

on himself, so he had the satisfaction of being able to turn a key upon his prying brothers. He really had to endure considerable persecution on account of this strong box; but, as I said before, it didn't trouble him much. People who don't see the point to a joke, miss some pleasure to be sure; but how easily the shafts of ridicule glance off from them! Harry and Alice and Will were welcome to their fun so long as they didn't dare to pick his lock!

"Now, Johnny," said Alice, "if in the dead of night you should hear a cry of fire out doors, and waking up should find the house all in a blaze, and tumbling in on our heads, what would you try to save?"

"My trunk, of course," answered Johnny, honestly, as if that could be the only thing expected of him.

"But wouldn't you try to get Will, or some of the rest of us out first?"

"Why, you could get out yourselves," said Johnny, gravely," but my trunk couldn't, you know, so I should slide that out of my window on to the piazza roof, and then tell some

of the men outside to climb up on the trellis and get it. I've planned about that often," added Johnny, sagely, as if he thought that Alice had been accusing, or at least suspecting him of a lack of forethought.

"Oh, hear him now!" cried Alice, "he thinks I don't know that he has laid awake nights watching to see if the house should catch on fire, and his old traps be forever lost. Charred bones of his darling brother Will are of no account at all, if he can only keep his old rusty screws and that precious glue-pot!"

But Johnny by this time, was quite lost in thought, as to what would be the very quickest way of getting the trunk through the window, and whether it would be best to stop for shoes and stockings, or to rush carelessly forth, and so Alice's exclamation was quite lost upon him. He didn't hear a word of it. If this insensibility to sounds could only have been regulated, it would have been a happy thing. I have heard of some resigned old person who said he was quite willing to lose his hearing, "there were as many bad things to hear

as good ones." Now if Johnny could have only turned a deaf ear to the unpleasant speeches that were sometimes made to him, or to the disagreeable sounds in nature, what a fortunate arrangment it would have been! He would never have lost his temper, or had his teeth set on edge; but as it was, his ears were quite as much at fault when it was best that they should hear to the very extent of their ability. Alas, Johnny had the very deafest ears in the Leonard family! Yet they were the largest, strange as it may seem! Poor Johnny's ears were something of a trial to his mother in his babyhood. She did admire a delicate, well-formed ear as much as beautiful hair, or a handsome nose; and Johnny's ears were too large for beauty—there was no escaping that fact—but she clung to the hope that they might prove, as that horrid wolf told poor little Red Riding-Hood, "all the better to hear with." Imagine her disappointment when she found, as I have said, that they were the very poorest organs of hearing that any of her children possessed!

Alice's were bad enough, as my readers all know, but Johnny's were worse. He was almost always in a brown study, either over some bit of machinery, like a watch, or a clock, or a pump; or else over some specimen of Natural History, bug or worm, leaf or flower; nothing came amiss to Johnny that was wonderfully made. When he was a little fellow he never tired of playing with a dilapidated coffee mill, and when he grew older the sewing machine held him in spell-bound admiration. And since he gave his whole mind to the contemplation of these things, he had none left to give heed to the reports of his ears. They used to have to go through all the waking-up processes with him that they had to with Alice, and with not so good results, for after he was fairly roused up and started, he frequently lapsed off again. And I don't think he was quite so conscious of his fault as Alice was, or so anxious to overcome it; so as faults don't cure themselves as a general thing, this deafness rather grew worse than better.

Johnny argued to himself, that since all he wanted was to be let alone, therefore he ought not to be disturbed; and the blame lay wholly with those who interfered with him. If they had a hard time getting him started in some new direction, why so much the worse for them! It was just what they might have expected! He would hardly have permitted himself to argue in this way where his dear father or mother was concerned. He allowed, even to himself, that they had some claims upon him, although there were times, when he was following up some charming investigation, when he wished that even they didn't want so much waiting upon! As to his brothers and sisters, he often thought it was a needed discipline to let them call in vain; and Johanna—it was a pity if such a big woman as she was, couldn't take care of her own affairs, and not be forever screaming at a fellow, just as he got to a place in his book, or his work, or his planning, where an interruption was particularly disagreeable! So Johnny was mainly useful to his mother and father,

and to them on account of his steadiness and methodical disposition. Whatever he was in the habit of doing regularly, he could be depended on to do, and in the very best way. He was a born conservative, liking old things and old ways, and preferring ever so much to jog along quietly in a well-beaten track to striking out in some new direction. There was an excellent reason for this choice of his—he could then have his mind at liberty to follow its own natural bent. He could be studying and planning as well as going his accustomed round. The tread-mill would have had no terrors at all for Johnny! He would have been of Dr. Holmes' opinion:

"If ever they should let me out,
When I have better grown,
Now, hang me, but I mean to have
A tread-mill of my own."

The wise mother took advantage of his peculiar traits, and arranged Johnny's work as systematically as possible, thus securing some very valuable and steady help; but she dread-

ed to undertake any irregular proceedings with this busy old fellow, and usually, if she saw that he was very much absorbed, she let him alone till he had had his "think" out.

Johanna was not always so considerate. She would break in upon his schemings very rudely sometimes, and dispel his trains of thought in a manner that was more startling than agreeable.

One day, when he was about nine years old, he sat lost in thought over an old horse-shoe. Prince had lost it off while grazing in the back yard, where Johnny was leading him about and letting him nibble at the fresh, long grass. When the shoe came off, Johnny picked it up, and, sitting down beside the quiet, old animal, he examined leisurely first the shoe and then the horse's foot. He thought he would study into the thing and see for himself just why it was shaped in the way it was, and why such nails were used in fastening it on; indeed, before he got through, the whole subject of feet came up, and he made up his mind as to the advantages of hoofs for quadrupeds of some

kinds, and claws for others; he even went so far as to take off his own shoe and stocking and examine carefully the structure of his own toes! He was just thinking about sandals, and how nice and cool they would be—almost as good as going bare-footed, yet without the inconveniences of getting bits of glass and rusty nails stuck into a boy's feet! He thought he could invent some that would be adapted to his own tastes, at least, and so he sat there in the sunshine speculating about it, with his old straw hat pulled down over his eyes, and scratching up the turf with the horse-shoe which he still held in one hand, while, with the other, he held old Prince's halter. Johanna, looking out at him, thought she beheld a complete picture of idleness—the dozy old horse, and the lazy boy; and being herself somewhat heated and tired, she felt a little more willing to disturb their ease. So she called out suddenly—"Johnny!" But Johnny was oblivious.

"Johnny!" again, a little louder than before.

Still no sign of consciousness.

"Johnny! Is it pretendin' to be aslape that ye are? Wake up now, and tie up that lazy old baste, and rin out in the garden an' get me some swate corn for dinner."

No answer from Johnny.

Then Johanna sallied forth, armed with the broom, and descended upon the deaf and dumb boy with a vigorous whack, well calculated to stimulate his faculties!

Johnny turned his great, grey eyes, full of calm dignity, upon her. "Why, what's the matter with you?" he said. "I didn't hear a word you said."

"Well, you knew I was talkin', didn't you? An' why couldn't you turn them big ears o' yourn so that they could catch the sound o' my words? Ye're the deadest boy I ever saw alive! Give me the strap, now, an' do you rin and bring me an armfull of swate corn for dinner."

"Look here, Johanna," said Johnny gravely, "what would you do for corn if I was dead?"

She surveyed him a moment to see if he

really expected an answer, and then replied, 'Sure an' I could get it meself if you was gone intirely—it's your lyin' here that thrys my temper—get up wid ye, now!" and she gave him another poke with the broom.

"Well, now, Johanna," Johnny said solemnly, "I wish you'd think I'm dead!"

"Och, an' it's that ye're afther, is it?" replied Johanna. "Well, dead it it is thin that we'll have ye!" and she marched off after the corn herself, while Johnny retired into his temporary grave, well pleased with his part of the arrangement.

When dinner was on the table, however, and the great plate full of sweet corn was sending out its savory odor, and Johnny sat ready as usual to dispose of at least three ears, Johanna interposed—

"If ye plaze mum, when ye come to ate the swate corn, it may be well to notice that Johnny 's *dead*, mum!"

"Johnny *dead?*" said Mrs. Leonard, a little shocked.

"Yes;" answered Johanna, "that was all

fixed betwixt him and me this mornin', when I wanted him to git it for me."

"Ah?" said Mrs. Leonard, looking at Johnny, who sat back in his chair somewhat discomfited.

"I only asked her to make believe I was dead till after she got the corn," said Johnny, with an air of injured innocence.

"Well, this being dead is pretty serious business," said the mother. "Do you think if I let you come to life enough to eat half an ear of corn this noon, you will be very much alive the next time Johanna wants a little help from you?"

Johnny promised with some reluctance; he evidently thought he had been imposed upon, but the other children enjoyed the joke tremendously, and Johnny had to hear a great many allusions to his sudden decease, some of which penetrated even his ears, and stirred up his placid temper considerably. He even meditated revenge, not on his roguish brothers, however, but on Johanna! He waited for an opportunity, and Johnny, we know, was a fellow who could wait!

The time came one day, when his mother had gone out to spend the afternoon, and Harry and Alice and Will were all away also. Little Rosa was with her mother, so that Johanna and Johnny had sole possession of the domains. Johanna was very pleasant and jocose, and Johnny kept up an outward show of good-nature. Little did she dream that he was 'biding his time, and that her hour had come!

"Johnny," said she, "slip down cellar, there's a darlint, and bring me up a couple of eggs; I want to make some o' that cake for tay that ye like so much."

But Johnny was deep in a book, and apparently impervious to all sounds.

"Is it dead ye are again, or deaf, which, now?" said she, but she ran down cellar herself for the eggs, not being in the mood for an altercation.

No sooner was she safely down than Johnny slid the fastening to the cellar door, flew round to the outside door and bolted that, and Johanna was his prisoner! When she came up

and tried to open the door, Johnny was walking leisurely down the street with his hands in his pockets, as innocent-looking a boy as you would meet. He found Will and proposed a trip out into the country, after some raspberries, to which Will joyfully assented, so the boys strolled away and were gone a couple of hours or more.

Meanwhile Johanna, after trying both of the doors in vain, and screaming herself hoarse to Johnny, with similar results, sat down on the cellar steps to await her release. It was very foreign to her habits to sit down idly and meditate, as she was of a very active turn of mind, but it seemed rather a case of necessity now! She waited and waited, but not a sound did she hear to indicate the return of her jailor. She looked hopelessly at the windows, but they were too high up to reach, and too small to allow her portly person to use them as a mode of egress, even if she could reach them. There was evidently nothing for her to do but to wait. If she had been constituted like Johnny, no doubt she would have enjoyed

the occasion, but being of an entirly different temperament, she did not! She thought of rats and mice, and of horrible tales she had heard of their setting upon some unfortunate prisoner like herself, and leaving nothing but some clean-picked bones! She thought of ghosts and hobgoblins, more horrible still, and fairly quaked with terror! She was really in a pitiable plight. If Johnny had dreamed of the extent of her distress, he would have hastened home, but as it was, he only thought it a good joke, and that Alice would let her out as soon as she got home, which would be very soon after he left. It seemed anything but soon to poor Johanna—that long two hours before she heard Alice's light, quick step overhead, and with loud and lamentable cries made known her hiding-place!

Alice rushed to the rescue. "Why, Johanna!" she said, laughing, in spite of her efforts to look sympathizing as the damsel emerged from her subterranean cell, "Why, what has happened?"

Johanna expressed herself rather incohe-

rently, but Alice gathered from her disjointed but forcible exclamations that she had been victimized, and that Johnny was the offender. It was very surprising to Alice, for she had supposed that if any one in the wide world was guiltless of practical joking, it was Johnny Leonard, and so she assured Johanna.

"I can't think he fastened you down on purpose," she said; "he must have had one of his absent-minded fits."

"Why didn't he let me up, thin, when I hollered?" said Johanna, wrathfully.

"Oh, it isn't anything new for Johnny to be deaf," said Alice.

"Deaf, is it?" said Johanna. "I'll docther his ears for him, if it's dafe he is!"

Just at that luckless moment Johnny appeared at the door, looking as if he had added murder to his other crime, so stained were his hands and face with raspberry juice.

"What do you mane, you young villain," said Johanna, "lockin' me up, an' rinnin' away like a thafe? Niver stoppin' at all, at all, whin I tould ye I had lots o' work to do an'

hadn't no time to be foolin' in that way! I'll tache ye bether manners!" and she advanced towards him menacingly.

"I thought I'd show you I wasn't dead," said Johnny, "but I didn't hear you say anything about your work. I thought it was all done up, and maybe you'd like to stay in a cool place till Alice got back!"

"Didn't hear me!" said Johanna, more irate than ever; "I'll clane yer ears for you," and with that she laid hold of the hapless Johnny. He was a strong boy, but he was no match for the brawny-armed Irish girl, and she quickly secured his two hands in one of her own, and dragged him helpless to the pump. Alice didn't dare to interfere; besides, I think she enjoyed the retributive justice of the thing just a little.

Well, that boy's ears were washed! They were pumped into, and on to, and over! They were scrubbed—they were rubbed—they were scoured, they were rinsed and dried; and then they were examined and the whole process repeated! Johanna made very thorough work

But she was tender-hearted after all, and got to laughing before she was half through with the cleansing process. Before Mrs. Leonard returned home Johanna and Johnny had made a compact agreeing to say nothing of their troubles, and so, as the Indians say, they "buried the hatchet," and lived in peace.

VI.

JOHNNY'S INVENTIONS.

JOHNNY'S thinking was to some purpose, as I have said. He took the greatest interest in other people's inventions, but he was not satisfied to let that be the end of his thoughts. He was intent on being an inventor himself, and was forever devising some labor-saving arrangement. His peculiar talent in this direction developed itself about as early in life as did Alice's poetical turn of mind, and was quite as engrossing.

When he was three or four years old, his mother set him to dressing himself; baby Will demanded so much of her time and attention,

there was but little left for the quiet, self-reliant little man, who was but two years the baby's senior. Very funny it was to see him gravely surveying the different garments as he put them on, and never making a mistake as to what fastened behind and what before; and then solemnly proceeding to putting on shoes and stockings. These, as every body knows, are the greatest trial to the young toilet-makers, for they have such a perverse way of getting on wrong side before, or with the heels on one side, or worse still, the heels will catch on the poor little toes, and obstinately refuse to go any further. But Johnny was a match for them. After he had a few experiences of this sort, he devised a mode of stopping this depraved way of twisting. He took a seat on the floor with his feet straight out before him. Then he took a stocking by the toe and held it out over his foot until it stopped turning, and hung in the right position with the heel turned from him. Then he cautiously dropped the leg of the stocking over his foot, and with his disengaged hand

drew it up sufficiently into place to enable him to be sure it was going on right; then he would, for the first time, let go of the toe, and use both hands to finish the work. This process he used to go through daily, with as much gravity and precision as if the most disastrous results would follow if he made any variation in his programme.

When little Rosa came, he made a most excellent little nurse. He had not yet begun to go to school, and so was at home almost constantly, and of course was frequently called into the little lady's service. But do you think when his mother said, "Come and rock the cradle, Johnny," that he took his little rocking-chair, and sat dowr by the cradle and proceeded to rock it in the ordinary way? Not he. Instead of that, he had a string tied to the side of the cradle and also to the back of his chair; then all he had to do was just to rock himself. He was evidently of the opinion that there is no merit in exerting one's self unnecessarily. So am I, for that matter!

Johnny had a sort of inherited enmity to

rats and mice, for his father's mill was of course, more or less infested with these vermin, and Mr. Leonard had a very natural reason for considering them enemies, to be dealt with in the most unrelenting way. Johnny very early in life, began to wage an exterminating war against them, and he was a most crafty and dangerous foe. For when he undertook anything he gave his whole mind to it, and that continually. There was really no limit to his patience and zeal. He thought of rats and mice all day, and he dreamed of rats and mice all night. He examined all the traps he could get hold of, and put them to practical tests with more or less success—generally less—but failure never baffled Johnny, it only inspired him to fresh efforts.

He was about seven years old when he heard for the first time "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." It was never more appreciated. Harry read it to him in a very animated way, and then he took possession of the book and spelled it out for himself. It set him to thinking in a new direction. He always took

things very literally, and the whole story struck him as very reasonable. If rats and mice could be managed that way in Germany, why couldn't they in America? If the Pied Piper could do it, why couldn't Johnny Leonard? He brooded over it in silence for many days, and decided to undertake the business. He would begin on a small scale at first, so that if he met with disappointment, it would not be so hard to bear. Besides he had heard of the Bishop of Bingen, "in his round tower on the Rhine," and thought it might be dangerous to get too many of his foes together in a solitary spot. Of course he intended to choose a quiet place, and have no partners in his experiment. Partners were Johnny's aversion.

There was a granary connected with the barn, where there was a bin of oats, and a meal box, and other stores, most savory and tempting to rats and mice, and consequently one of their favorite resorts. There were various suspicious looking holes, down which Johnny had frequently seen the four-footed

robbers vanish in hot haste, when he had suddenly opened the door. Harry had nailed bits of tin over the holes often, but it only resulted in the appearance of new ones, and at this particular time Johnny found that there were at least, two mouse holes in daily use in the granary. He made some effort to find out first what kind of an instrument that mysterious "pipe" of the famous piper's was. but was unable to ascertain exactly. Still, if mice liked one kind of music, why might they not another? The only musical instrument he possessed was a jews-harp, and he decided to try its virtues. His plan was to get as many rats and mice together as possible, and then suddenly cover up the holes so that they would have no chance to escape. Then he would get two or three cats for allies, and dispatch his helpless captives!

It was cold weather when he conceived this plan, but that was not a hindrance worth mentioning. He put on his overcoat, cap, tippet and mittens one morning, and slipping his Jew's-harp into his pocket, said nothing to

anybody of his projects, but went quietly out as if he was only going on an ordinary walk. In two minutes he was safe in the granary, with the doors all shut. Then he took off his tippet and mittens, and quietly addressed himself to the task of charming forth his invisible and wary foes. Johnny was an expert with his instrument, and there surely was no reason why the mice should not be highly entertained if they were not enchanted! His seat was an inverted four-quart measure, which was very comfortable, indeed, and he knew he would have a real good time, even if the mice refused to come out. He felt entirely safe, too, for he had prepared a spear as a weapon of defence, if one was needed—a long, wooden instrument, with a darning-needle firmly fastened into one end.

So he sat and played in the most enticing manner, now softly and dreamily, and now in louder and more inspiring strains. It really was very attractive music, and he blew and trilled away until his lips grew parched and his throat dry. The mice must have heard it,

I am sure, and I don't doubt they enjoyed it; but they obstinately refused to come forth. I presume they, too, had heard of the Pied Piper!

Johnny played till it was dinner-time, and "the keen demands of appetite" led him to abandon his enterprise for that morning; then he hid his spear and Jew's-harp, and went in to dinner.

"Where have you been, my dear?" asked his mother.

"Oh, not far off," answered Johnny, truthfully; and there was no more inquiry made.

The next day he resumed his playing, and harped away to those insensible mice for another long two hours, but with as little success as on the previous day.

Still again another morning. Then he concluded that a Jew's-harp wasn't the right thing, and tried an old flute of his father's Still the mice wouldn't be charmed. Nobody knows how long he would have persevered in his efforts, if Johanna hadn't gone out to the barn one morning to carry some apple-parings

to old Prince. She went boldly in, but hearing the faint, distant music, thought it proceeded from some uncanny source, dashed, down her pan of parings, and fled in dismay. When, in the house, she reported the strange sounds, and Harry went immediately out to the barn to investigate. He traced the mysterious music to its source, and, going upstairs softly, listened until he was sure that the sounds were of an earthly sort. Then he went boldly up to the granary-door, but found it fastened on the inside. The music ceased suddenly, and Harry was very much puzzled, but suspected it was produced by either Johnny or Will, so he called out, "Come, Mr. Musician, don't you want an audience? Let me in, and we'll have a duet!"

Thereupon Johnny opened the door, and Harry found, to his surprise, that he was all alone, and no sign of any musical instrument about him. Harry tried to coax an explanation out of him, but Johnny was quite impenetrable. Finally, a vigorous search brought to light the flute—it was plunged into the bin

of oats at the first alarm; but the spear escaped discovery.

"Now, look here, old fellow," said Harry, "what on earth made you come up here to have your concert?" But Johnny deigned no reply; and, to this day, in the Leonard family, Johnny's sudden fondness for solitary musical performances is an unexplained freak. Of course, he was bantered about it a great deal by his merry brother, but he was as stoical as usual, and by and by the subject was dropped. Johnny, however, did not dare to renew his imitation of the Pied Piper.

He did, however, try his luck at spearing mice. This not being so novel an undertaking, he did not think best to be so secretive about it; and as the pantry and cellar were somewhat infested with these animals, as well as the granary and mill, he used frequently to be discovered by some member of the family sitting cross-legged by a mouse-hole, with a piece of cheese laid temptingly near it. He would sit motionless, with his hand on his spear, like an Esquimaux watching for a seal,

his great, grey eyes half shut, but riveted on the hole. I am happy to tell you that he was several times rewarded for his long vigils by seeing the mouse actually come out and begin to nibble at the cheese; but sometimes it looked so cunning, with its bright eyes and alert ways, that he forgot all about killing it till it was too late, and it had retreated into its hiding-place, and sometimes he hurled his weapon in vain; but once, marvellous to relate, he actually did impale his poor little victim with that murderous darning-needle! He took great encouragement from this, and plied his new trade with great vigor—if one can show vigor by sitting still! But he took a severe cold from a two hours' sojourn in the cellar, unbeknown to his mother, who persuaded him, after that, to try some other mode of wartare.

After much thought, he decided on a new plan. He argued to himself that if a mouse was so afraid of one boy as to be very wary about coming out, he would be ever so much more afraid of three or four boys. That is

good logic, isn't it? But it was dangerous for real boys to sit around in such cool and damp localities as mice frequent; so the brilliant idea hit our hero of fixing up some make-believe boys, who should be such a terror to the small depredators that they should remain forever in their cells, and there perish miserably! He argued farther, that, probably, the size of the statue wouldn't make any difference to the mice, who, for aught he could dis cover, were just as afraid of a boy as a man. Why shouldn't they be as suspicious of very small men? He tried to obtain a loan of Alice's cast-off babies, but met with a decided refusal. She wouldn't think of letting a boy touch her still tenderly-cherished pets. She knew it would end in their utter destruction. So Johnny was thrown back on his own resources and his "witty inventions," which, happily, never failed him. He had a dilapidated set of ten-pins, which, he thought, could be turned to good advantage. He was very skillful with his jack-knife, and he carved a very respectable-looking human face on each

of the ten-pin heads. When he had touched them up with red and white paints, and made the eyes staring and black, they presented an appearance hideous enough, certainly, to have struck terror to the heart of the boldest mouse or rat! These frightful images he stationed around different holes, and calmly awaited the result.

As he had not mentioned his new plan to any one, and had worked at his small men in privacy, imagine the stir it made in the family when Alice, going into a store-room not much frequented, discovered a row of these little spectres keeping guard around a mouse-hole! She was generally very considerate to Johnny's feelings, but this was too funny to keep still about. She fairly screamed with laughter, and in a moment had a group about her all shouting and laughing, too. Johnny heard the uproar and came in also, looking a little confused and vexed, but by no means in as ungovernable a fury as a boy might have been who was less of a philosopher. We should never have had any steam-engines or tele-

graphs, if the inventors had cared much for ridicule, and our Johnny was an inventor, you see!

"Well done!" cried Harry, "the old fellow has beat himself this time! I've often heard of scare-crows, but I never heard of *scare-mice* before!"

Mrs. Leonard came to the rescue. She couldn't help laughing—that was out of the question, but she said, cheerily, "Never mind them, my Johnny boy, it isn't every little seven-year old who would have thought of that plan. I wish our big Harry here would rack his brains a little on the mouse-question. It wouldn't hurt his head, I'm sure, to use it a little more, and it might do the rest of us some good. I'm going to offer a bounty for mice-tails!"

Johnny's "scare-mice," as they all called them, were not removed. Johanna, who had very quick sympathies, declared it would do no harm to try them, and she took a great deal of pains to convince herself, and all the household, that "them little images of John-

ny's had scared every mouse out o' the store-room." She added, often, "Sure an' I can't look at 'em meself widout screechin', an' I'm bolder than a mouse!"

Johnny was not daunted even by this affair, and still relentlessly pursued his foes. He tried all sorts of traps, and with very fair success. There was only one kind suggested to him that he really never did try, and that was to set his own mouth temptingly near the hole, and snap his sharp young teeth upon the first mouse that entered into the trap! He took the suggestion gravely, but decided to leave that business to the cats.

His perseverance was rewarded by the total extermination of the pests from the house and barn, and by a large addition to his pocket-money; for the bounty which his mother offered was one cent for a mouse-tail, and five cents for a rat's "caudal appendage." Johnny had money to let!

The employés in Mr. Leonard's mill were mostly Germans, and Johnny was very much at home with Dutchmen. They were people

after his own heart—grave, quiet, thoughtful—and he enjoyed their society. Among them was one elderly man, whose given name was Adam, and who had been in Mr. Leonard's employ for years. He was Johnny's especial friend. Of course he had a great long surname, but he was never called by it, and Johnny never attempted it. It was always "Adam" and "Johnny" with them, as if they were of the same age, and I think they were at heart, for Johnny was a mature boy in many respects, while Adam had the heart of a child. They got along charmingly together. Adam's old black pipe and dusty clothes were not in the least offensive to Johnny, and the little yellow-haired, grey-eyed boy, with his square face, sturdy figure, and plain looks and ways, seemed to the old German the very counterpart of a little son of his whom long years before he saw laid in his little grave in the "fatherland.

Adam had been in this country so long that he spoke our language very well, only betraying his foreign birth by an occasional mistake

in phraseology; or, when talking in haste, by a failure to get his tongue into just the right position for a *th*, or his lips in the shape required by a *w*. Adam lived in a snug little house near Mr. Leonard's home, where he and his good wife lived in the most industrious and placid way. Their children were all grown up and gone. Everything within doors was scoured and polished; everything without looked thrifty and tidy, and, in summer, even beautiful, with German pinks and asters, and tulips bordering the clean-swept garden paths. Here Johnny Leonard dearly loved to come and make a visit. The good motherly German woman was as fond of him as her husband was, and always made him very welcome. Johnny thought her seed-cakes were the most delicious morsels that ever were made, and that the garden was the most delightful one that had adorned this sinful earth since the time of that first garden tilled by the first Adam. If Johnny was missing, it was safe to infer that he had gone over to Adam's for a little season of quiet and congenial social

intercourse. Harry used to call it Johnny's Paradise.

The old Dutchman liked the same things that Johnny did—the mill above all things. He always dignified it with a feminine pronoun, speaking of it invariably as "she" and "her," and treating it with the greatest tenderness and consideration. So Adam had a great deal of care and responsibility intrusted to him in connection with the mill, and always proved himself worthy of it. Johnny, too, loved the mill, and at a very early age was allowed to go with Adam into its mysterious and attractive precincts. He was such a tractable and reliable little man, so willing to stay just where he was told to, and with such a wholesome awe and reverence for machinery, that his father laid aside his usual caution, and by the time he was eight or nine years old he had the freedom of the mill whenever he chose to avail himself of it. His younger brother Will did not share this liberty by any means. Having very nearly drowned himself once, he had afterwards certain metes and


W. Coleman

bounds set, beyond which he was forbidden to venture. As to Harry he did not like the mill; it was too dusty and dirty to suit his nice tastes; so it happened that Johnny was often at the mill alone—that is without either of his brothers. He always met with a hearty greeting from old Adam, and was sure of having a profitable and delightful time, following the old man carefully about, and getting all his questions answered in the kindest and most truthful way. The other men would teaze him, and tell all sorts of queer stories to him; but Adam dealt with him honestly, never tried to quiz him, and listened with a perfectly grave face to any of Johnny's confidences with regard to his plans or inventions. So one summer day, not long after his invention of the "scare-mice," Johnny put an old tea-chest that his mother had given him on to his little wheel-barrow and carried it to the mill. When he arrived there, he deposited it in a safe corner, and went to look for Adam. He found him unloading bags of wheat from a farmer's wagon, so as he never rushed heed-

lessly into business, he sat down on a bag of wheat and waited quietly for Adam to get through and be at leisure to listen to his schemes. It was always pleasure enough to him to sit in the mill and hear the roaring of the water and the steady whirr of the machinery; to feel the shuddering motion of the building, as it jarred with the ceaseless turning of the wheel, and to see the sunshine lighting up the dusty air till it looked like golden mist. He always fell into a delightful revery, and he did so now, resting his chin on his hands and his elbows on his knees. He almost forgot to speak even after the last bag was emptied, and the horses and wagon went rattling away. But he was roused by Adam's kindly, though gruff voice—

"Now, little Hans, what is the mill in your head grinding?"

So Johnny rose up and went and brought in his tea-chest, and then beckoned Adam to come and join him in a consultation over it. Adam went good-naturedly, and gazed into the depths of the box in a solemn

way. It was lined with a thin sheet of lead.

Johnny drew up close to him and spoke low; "Do you suppose a mouse or a rat could climb up the sides of this box if we once had 'em inside?"

"Well, a mouse couldn't," said Adam, surveying it closely, and feeling of the lead to see how smooth it might be; "but a rat—dunder! you can't never tell what they'll do! They are imps—they are not beasts!" and he spoke with vehemence, making *d*s of all his *th*s, for rats were Adam's detestation.

"Are there lots of mice 'round?" asked Johnny.

"Plenty—plenty!" answered Adam, emphatically; "but how are you going to get 'em in there?"

Johnny drew still nearer and spoke lower. See here," and he produced a strip of pine wood about an inch wide and six inches long, "I'm going to balance this on the edge of the box, and rest the outside end on another little stick of wood that can stand up on the floor

and that a mouse can climb up on. Then I'l put a bit of cheese on the end of the stick that is over the chest, and when the mouse goes out to get it, down he'll tumble into the box!"

"Yes, yes!" said Adam, nodding approvingly. "Very good for the little Hans to plan! But you can only catch one mouse in a night."

"Of course not," said Johnny, looking up inquiringly.

"Only it will take some time to catch a mill full," said Adam, a little doubtfully.

"Yes," answered Johnny, full of courage, "it'll take a good while, *but everything does;*" and he put his hands in his pockets, and walked around his contrivance with proud satisfaction, very much as, I presume, Robert Fulton walked around the first steamboat, or Professor Morse around the first telegraphic machine. He wasn't, in the least, daunted by the number of his foes—that only encouraged him! Johnny would have been just the fellow to study Geology or Astronomy. The great

immeasurable periods of time, and the unlimited numbers wouldn't trouble him at all!

"Now, Adam, show me the best place to set it, and we'll begin to-night," he said.

So Adam picked up the box, and carried it, followed by Johnny, to an upper room, where there were great bins of wheat stored, and told Johnny where he thought would be the best location for it. Here Johnny, who had come provided with all the useful fixtures, carefully set up his trap, and left it.

The next morning, Johnny was on hand at a very early hour to see the result of his invention. Adam spied him from afar—his yellow locks gleaming in the morning sun—and greeted him cheerily. "Good morning thou son of the sun!" he said; then subsiding into everyday style, "run up-stairs and see your luck."

Johnny's eyes shone, and his feet fairly flew up the stairs. Sure enough there was a poor little mouse running helplessly and frantically around the bottom of the box, and, gathering

new terror from Johnny's presence, making fruitless scrambles and leaps upward.

I am happy to say that, although Johnny was as delighted with his success as it was possible for a boy to be, yet his heart half relented towards his poor little captive, and he dreaded to put an end to the life which was so eager to escape from danger. He had to call Adam, who seemed to have no scruples, but quickly despatched the poor animal. Johnny was fairly thrilled with his triumph and walked around his chest, with his hands in his pockets, for a good deal longer time than he did the day before!

Then he began to think how he wished he could have seen the mouse when he ventured out on that walk so beset with perils, and decided that he would set his trap again, and lie n wait for the result—which thought he carried into execution. All that day Johnny kept patient watch, but in vain. There was so much noise, and so many men running to and fro, that the mice evidently thought it prudent to keep out of sight. So when he went home

to tea, trotting along with his hand in his father's, he told him about his wonderful trap, but said nothing of his disappointment. In his secret heart he was revolving plans for seeing a mouse some night "walk the plank." That is what the horrible old pirates used to call a similar way they had of plunging their poor victims into the deep, murder-concealing sea. But Johnny knew nothing about that. All he thought about was how he longed to see, with his own eyes, an unsuspecting mouse advancing eagerly towards that tempting bit of cheese, and then, in the flash of an eye, hurled downward to its doom. But the story as to how he accomplished his desire, I must keep for a new chapter.

VII.

JOHNNY'S NIGHT IN THE MILL.

"A PENNY for your thoughts, Johnny," said his mother, that night at the tea-table; but Johnny's thoughts were not to be bought for a penny. He didn't even come out of his meditations enough to tell them about his invention. But his father explained that Johnny had really invented a remarkable trap, and that it was very excusable if he was a little absent-minded in consequence. "I presume he is planning now about getting out a patent, and going to Washington to attend to it!" said Mr. Leonard.

"Had you got as far as to have an interview with Mr. Lincoln?" asked Harry.

But Johnny made no answer; he didn't hear a word of the question.

"You have been at the mill all day, my little boy," said Mrs. Leonard, "and I have been ever so lonely without you. I can't help being worried about you, too. You're a little fellow, Johnny, to be in such a dangerous sort of a place. You must be very, very careful, and use your eyes and ears more than you do here at home, or I fear something dreadful will happen to you."

But Johnny didn't hear what she said, although he looked very attentive, slowly and in silence eating his bread and butter.

"We trust you a great deal, Johnny, for a boy only eight years old," said the father "and you must indeed do as mother says and be on the look-out for danger."

"And on the *hark*-out too," said Alice.

All of which was entirely lost on Johnny, in spite of his serious air. But fortunately it was advice that was not particularly needed,

he was so cautious and wise. Besides, as the drunkard said to the friend who tried to warn him, "he knew more good advice already than he knew what to do with!"

After Johnny went to bed that night, he lay revolving plans in his mind for watching his trap a while in the evening. He knew his mother never would consent to his going to the mill in the night, but he thought he might get leave to spend an evening at his father's office, and then with Adam's help coax his father to let him go and watch a little while by his darling trap. He made up his mind that would be the only way to achieve his heart's desire, and that he would improve the earliest opportunity to beg the favor. Then he lapsed off into uneasy slumbers, for like Cassius "he thought too much," and consequently didn't always "sleep o' nights." He dreamed now that he was walking in Adam's garden, and that all at once he came to an empty well, down which he looked cautiously, and could see the dry and shining sand at the bottom. A great plank lay near, and he

thought no doubt it was meant to cover the well, so he lifted it with a great deal of trouble, and shoved it across the yawning pit. Just then Christine (Adam's wife), called to him to run across the board, and bring her some of those red hollyhocks, for she was going to a wedding and wanted them to wear in her hair! A most singular request he thought; and how those great red flowers would look stuck in plain old Christine's grey hair! But she told him to hurry, and he decided to risk stepping on the plank, for if he turned out at all he would be walking on some of Christine's choice flower borders. He shuddered, but took a step forward—it tipped!—He threw up his hands with a scream, and went down—down—down! Who has not experienced the horrible dream? Just then he awoke, and with a feeling of profound thankfulness, felt his own soft bed beneath him. "Dear me!' he thought, "I'm glad that was a dream," and then a moment afterwards, "and I'm glad I'm not a mouse!"

The next morning there was another mouse

in the box, whose midnight experiences had evidently not been "all a dream."

Johnny felt as if his success was beyond his hopes. The men all praised his invention, and Adam nodded to him out of a cloud of tobacco smoke, with more than his usual warmth. It was Adam's firm belief that Johnny was a genius.

But Johnny was wise enough not to spend that day at the mill, among his friends and admirers. He went home and was one of the best of boys. He amused Rosa by the hour, he held skeins of worsted for Alice, he picked up chips for Johanna, *and he heard every time his mother spoke to him.* She made up her mind that he was a perfect treasure of a boy, and kissed him heartily on both of his ruddy cheeks as she brushed his hair before tea.

As they sat at the table enjoying a strawberry short cake, Johnny thought now was the time to put in his petition, so he said boldly, "Oh, father, how I'd like to go down to your office with you this evening!"

I guess that wouldn't be a good plan, would it mother?" said his father.

"It would be pulling out a bad thread,' said Mrs. Leonard, wisely.

Johnny thought a moment, and concluded his mother's remark had reference to his clothes.

"Why, I'd be sure not to tear my clothes," he said, a little surprised that his mother's objections took that shape.

They all laughed, and he felt more puzzled. So Mrs. Leonard explained kindly the meaning of the old proverb, and Johnny proceeded to argue his case. "I won't ask to go again, mother, but I would so like to go just this once;" and the mother's heart relented, when she saw he was so much in earnest. Mr. Leonard, too, thought the indulgence would do no harm; besides, he always enjoyed the society of his quiet, thinking little boy, who never meddled with what was forbidden, or asked questions when it was inconvenient to answer them. So it was decided that Johnny might go, "just that once."

The next move for Johnny was to run over to Adam's, and ask him if he couldn't make some business down at the office that evening. He found the old man sitting on a bench outside his door, lost in the tranquil enjoyment of his evening pipe, while Christine was knitting by his side in the rapid German way, using five needles instead of four, and having one stuck in a little sheath kept in place by her apron strings.

Johnny ran right up to them, but with his natural instinct of politeness took off his straw hat, and stood with it in his hands, while he made known his errand. "Now, Adam, isn't it time for you and father to look over your accounts, or can't you make some business down at the office? I do want most awfully to watch my trap at the mill a little while, and you can get father to let me go over with you. I know he won't no other way; do, please Adam," and he laid his hand on the old miller's shoulder.

Adam took his pipe out of his mouth and said, slowly, "Let us think—let us think a little."

But Christine said, promptly, "Go mit him, Adam, go. Is it not so well to please the child as to smoke?"

So Adam yielded without farther thinking, though dear to him was the rest of this evening hour, and, going in, he took down from behind the clock the little account book, wherein, although his hands were hard and stiff with labor, he still wrote in the beautiful handwriting he had learned in his youth, the accounts he kept with Mr. Leonard and with others.

"So you are coming, Adam?" cried Johnny in an excited delighted tone. "Thank you, ever so much! but I must run back to go with father, and you will come soon?"

"Yes," said Adam, "when I have looked over my book a little."

So Johnny ran back home and joined his father, who had just started for the office.

"I shall have to take you into partnership with me pretty soon," said the father, "you like the mill so well."

"Yes, father," said Johnny, "that will suit

me splendidly, and we'll keep Adam always won't we, father?"

"Yes, we'll keep Adam if we can, Johnny."

"Adam and I just *love* the mill, father, don't you?"

"Well, not just as you and Adam do, I guess; you see sometimes I have lost a great deal of money in flour, and then I have felt as if those great mill-stones were about my neck pulling me down into the depths of the sea." So they chatted together as they walked along in the summer twilight. Then, when the office was reached, Mr. Leonard sat down to his writing, and Johnny tried to look over two or three maps that hung about on the walls, but he kept one eye out of the window watching for his friend, and in a few moments was rewarded by seeing him coming down the street He came in soon, and Mr. Leonard greeted him pleasantly. "Sit down, Adam," he said "How have things gone at the mill to-day?"

"First-rate," answered Adam, who had caught that universal American adjective and

adverb. "She never worked better, but she'll have to have a little new gearing before long;' and he went on to tell of certain things that were wearing out. Then there was a pause, and he looked a little confused as he took out his account-book. "Is it a good time for you to look over our accounts a little?" he asked.

"Why, certainly," said Mr. Leonard, "but we settled up only a little while ago. Is anything wrong?"

"No, no," said Adam, "I'm all right, but I just thought we'd compare our books again a little." He was really at a loss for an excuse.

So Mr. Leonard willingly took down his books, and in five minutes the items were all compared, and, as usual, found to agree.

Johnny was on the watch, and the moment he saw the business was ended came eagerly forward. "Now, father," he said, "please mayn't Adam and me go over to the mill a little while? I do so want to look at my trap.'

"Oh, that's what it all means, is it?" said Mr. Leonard, laughing merrily. "You and

Adam are in league, I see! Well, run along, but how are you going to see in the dark."

"It isn't dark to-night, father, look at the moonlight. We don't want any light to scare mice."

Mr. Leonard was in the habit of keeping the key to the mill himself, as he generally went over and looked around a little before coming home at night, and Adam called for it at Mr. Leonard's house early every morning. So now he handed the key to Adam, and the allies set forth. The mill and the office joined, so they had but a step to go. Johnny was exuberant. It was the most exciting thing that had happened in his brief history. But he controlled his desire to make a little talk about it, and they went softly into the mill and up the broad stairs together. How cautiously Johnny tip-toed up to his trap! It was undisturbed. So he came back to Adam and held a whispered consultation. It ended with Adam's taking a seat down on the lower steps of the stairs, while Johnny fixed himself carefully at a good post for observation near the

box. There he sat motionless for more than half an hour. The moon shone in at the window almost as brightly as the sun, and Johnny once saw a mouse dart across the floor, but not one came near his trap. Adam fell into a little doze sitting there so still, but at length decided that it was time to go, so he went to the top of the stairs and called softly to Johnny, "Have you seen anything?"

"No," answered Johnny, coming down from his perch with an air of great disappointment. "Have you got tired, Adam?"

"Well, no," answered Adam, "but I'm *very rested*, and your father'll be wondering what has become of us."

So Johnny reluctantly gave up his watch, and followed his old friend back to the office again.

"Oh! here you are, all safe and sound," said Mr. Leonard. "I was just going out to look for you. I hope you've had a lively time up there; how many mice did you slay Johnny?"

"Not any," said Johnny, a little crest-fallen

"I guess I'll run right along home with Adam father," he added.

"Very well," said the father, "that will be better than to wait for me. Did you lock the mill door, Adam?"

"Why, no, I forgot," answered Adam, apologetically. "I'll run right around and lock it; the key is in the door. I was most asleep when I came out, I guess."

"Never mind," said Mr. Leonard, "I'm going home presently, and I'll lock it. You and Johnny may go right along."

Then they exchanged good-nights, and the old German and his little charge went homewards in the lovely moonlight. But when they had got nearly there, Adam remembered that Christine had asked him to bring home some tea, and turned back to get some. When the grocery was reached, Johnny suddenly said, "Adam, I believe I'll run back and wait for father. He said he was going home soon, you know."

"Better not go back," said Adam. "What for do you want to?"

"Oh, because!" answered Johnny, falling back on that unanswerable argument. "I'm going," he added, "good-bye, Adam."

"Be sure and go straight to the office," said Adam, feeling a little doubtful about its being just the best way.

"Yes, of course," answered Johnny, running away down the street. Adam stood and watched him till he turned a corner, and then feeling sure that he could be trusted not to go astray, went into the grocery, and afterward home. Christine was watching for him, and questioned him as to the evening's doings. When he told of Johnny's watch for the mouse, she laughed merrily. "Was there never such a child?" she said. But when Adam told of Johnny's starting to come with him, and then turning back, she said, with true womanly caution, "That was not safe; you should have held him in your hand till you got him home."

"Oh, he'll take care," said Adam, "he has a wise old head; besides I did watch him till he was almost at the mill."

But Christine shook her head, and found her dreams were troubled that night.

Meanwhile Johnny, just as he reached the door of his father's office, thought to himself that likely enough it would be an hour before his father would be ready to go home, and, meanwhile, why couldn't he just go and keep watch by that enticing trap again? He would hear his father when he came to lock the door, and would come right down. Of course, his father would be astonished, and scold him a little, and, as to mother, she would be frightened to death if she knew it; but then if he only could see a mouse tumble into that trap it would be worth any risk!

The temptation was too strong for Johnny, and, in a minute more, he was creeping around in the mill as softly as the creaking boards would admit. Again he found that the bait was untouched, and again he "mounted guard." A thought of fear never entered his head. Johnny was a wonderfully practical fellow. Ghosts and goblins were things in which he entirely disbelieved; and, pray, what

was there at all frightful in bags and boxes, or great beams and rafters hung with floury cobwebs? He didn't even look around for a burglar or a thief, who would be mean enough to steal anything from "father," whose hands were always so open to the poor! He simply sat down on the corner of a box, in full sight of his trap, but a little in the shadow himself. Then he turned into a statue! A little, fat, breathing statue, with a head full of thoughts and devices concerning mice, and with all its senses locked save the sense of sight!

He "took no note of time." An hour went by, and still not a mouse to be seen, when suddenly there is a little stir behind a barrel, and then a mouse ran out a little ways, stopped suddenly, retreated, and all was still again. A moment more, and out it came again—again advanced and paused, seeming to scent danger in the air. Johnny held his breath, and wished he could stop the beating of his heart! But this time it seemed to make up its mind that there was only the aroma of cheese in the air and not a lurking foe, and in a moment it was

running around the box and scrambling up its sides a little way; then down again and around, as if it were on a tour of investigation.

Just then there was a key turned in a lock down-stairs. It could have been distinctly heard by any one whose ears were in the least attentive, for Mr. Leonard shook the door a little to be sure that it was secure, and took out the key with his usual nervous haste, making a good deal of rattling as he did so. But do you think Johnny heard any such sounds? Not he! He had no ears for anything but that mouse! Round and round the mouse went in eager haste, and at last, joyful to relate! up the rough stick of wood that seemed as a support to the end of the horizontal stick. Off it dashed on to the upper edge of the box—around and around—this way and that—all animation and agility. Johnny's gaze was riveted on the beautiful little animal, and not a motion escaped him. Finally it perches itself on the fatal stick, advances coyly, drawn on by the tempting cheese. An instant more,

and, with a frantic but fruitless leap upward, it drops into the abyss below!

Johnny sprang forward in breathless excitement. There, in one corner, crouched the terror-stricken mouse, too much paralyzed to move. "Ho-ho! sir," said Johnny, "what do you think of that? Have you lost your relish for cheese?" Then his heart softened towards the poor creature. "You may have the cheese, anyway," he said, poking it towards him with the stick, "maybe you'll get over your scare before morning, and be hungry."

Then, for the first time, Johnny began to wonder if it wasn't almost time for his father to start for home, and looked out to see if he could catch a glimpse of the light in the office window; but the window was not in the right direction to be visible. He waited a while, walking about, and watching the mouse, but all the while listening for the step which would be so welcome. At last he decided to go down and go over to the office without any more delay. "Good night, Mr. Mouse, and

pleasant dreams to you," he said gaily, and then ran down the stairs. Picture his amazement and consternation when he found himself locked in! He stood and thought a moment. Yes, it was surely so; his father must have come and locked the door, and then walked away home, and not a sound of it had he heard! He felt alarmed and troubled enough, but, in a moment, thought that as soon as his father reached home and found he was not there, he would go over to Adam's, and the two would come to the mill as the very first spot to be searched. He was more distressed to think of their alarm and trouble than he was for himself a great deal. Then he tried to think of some way to get out, but the lower windows were closed with heavy shutters, and the other door, he knew, was kept locked, even in the daytime, almost always. One of the upper windows he might possibly get open, but how was he to get to the ground? But his father would be there soon, he kept saying to himself, and he used his ears as he had never used them before.

What could delay him so? He went up-stairs again, and sat down by his trap, but somehow he had lost his interest in the poor little mouse, who fixed his black eyes on him, Johnny thought, in a rather unpleasant and knowing manner! Half an hour, and then an hour went by, and still Johnny sat there disconsolately. It was the first time that solitude had ever been too much for him. Time hung heavy on his hands that night! He wandered up-stairs and down, trying windows and doors and growing more and more miserable.

It was midnight, he was sure, and his father must have gone to bed in some mysterious way, without making any inquiries about him. He tried to feel a little injured and neglected, but did not make much headway at that, for he was too well aware that it was all his own fault. He concluded he might as well be resigned to his fate and lay down on a heap of empty bags. The night was warm, so that he didn't feel in the least uncomfortable. There was evidently nothing for him to do but lie

still, and wait for the morning. And then he thought what a fuss there'd be! When he got as far as to how his mother's face would look when she found he was missing, his lips began to quiver, and two or three big tears rolled down on to the flour bags. But he soon banished those thoughts and grew cheerful and composed. Looking up through the window, he saw the stars shining calmly, and the moon sailing through the cloudless sky, and a sense of peace stole over him. He knew he had not meant to do very wrong, although things had turned out so badly with him. He knew too, that the morning would come soon, and the anxiety of his friends would be very short-lived; so he looked up into the sky and said, "Now I lay me down to sleep," as if he had been at home in his own little bed. Then he thought he would go to sleep, but he found the situation was quite too novel a one for that degree of composure. He heard the poor little four-footed prisoner scrambling round in his cell, and he got right up, and went and laid the box down

on its side, and really enjoyed seeing the little creature scamper away to its hole!

"A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind!"

Then Johnny went back to his floury bed, and again essayed to sleep. But was there ever such a noisy night? There was the constant plashing and gurgling of the water, as it washed by and under the mill. He thought it was about twice as loud as it was in the day time. Then there was a light wind blowing; he would not have noticed it if the sun had been shining, but now it made the shingles rattle on the roof; and a tree whose branches touched the mill, swayed and brushed against the clap-boards, while all around him and above him and beneath him, he could hear a little rustling or scrambling or squeaking that told how numerous and lively were the other occupants of the mill. Johnny thought of the Bishop of Bingen, and his courage began to falter!

"Oh, dear!" he thought, "why didn't I hear father when he locked that door? Is it

my ears that are so good for nothing, or is it something inside my head that I might help if I tried hard enough? My ears are all right I should think, from the way I hear things now! O, my! what does ail the rats and mice? Can they be getting an army together?" Then he fell to thinking what if they should attack him, and kill him, and pick his bones so that there would be nothing but a little ghastly white skeleton there in the morning, for Adam and his father to carry home? It was too horrible to think of, and he got up and walked about, and looked out of the window to see if it was daylight yet. He even thought of breaking out a window and screaming "Murder!" but concluded on the whole, to wait about that till he saw some signs of an attack. He sat down, however, near the window, and fell to thinking again. I told you he didn't have the least faith in ghosts, and a supernatural world that meddled with our own; so he was entirely undisturbed that night by any visions of sheeted spectres or elves, or imps of any sort; though if his ten-

dencies had been that way, there was plenty to make them out of. But he saw visions for all that, and I will tell you what he saw—MICE! Mice inveigled—betrayed—tortured—murdered! Mice choked to death in traps! Mice shut up in boxes, in the most unexpected ways, and then, when half dead with apprehension, turned loose for the enjoyment of some savage cat, who tortured her poor victim before slaying it, with an ingenuity and cruelty only equalled by human beings! Mice impaled on darning-needle spears! Mice drowned, mice mutilated! Mice stoned to death, or beaten to death with clubs! Mice persecuted and terrified, till their lives become a burden! Mice poisoned, and left to die miserably! Mice in tender infancy starved to death, by having their loving parents cruelly murdered! All this he saw, and more!

Yet Johnny was not a cruel boy, and I'm not arguing that mice have any rights that boys are bound to respect. I'm only telling you what our Johnny saw that night in the mill!

His blood ran cold, and he felt that if all the mice and rats (for would he not have had just such visions of rats if they had not been more than a match for him?) should combine their forces and attack him, he couldn't look them in the eye and defend himself.

He had other reflections also as he sat there blinking and winking, and wishing it was morning. He meditated deeply, and to much subsequent advantage, on the subject of his *ears*. He thought that if he carried those organs safely home in the morning, ungnawed by his squeaking, and evidently hungry, fellow lodgers, he would use them to better purpose than he had ever done before. He would try and do as the Bible said, and he thought just how his mother had looked when she quoted the command to him, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

And still there were no indications of an attack from the mice. Johnny thought if they shouldn't harm him, he would surely never forget their forgiving, generous treatment. He had read only the other day about the

Arabs—how they never harmed a foe who sought shelter in one of their tents, and he thought perhaps the Arab code of honor prevailed among mice and rats. He felt safer and sleepier after that, and finally lay down again on the heap of bags, and went sound asleep. Johnny was as "safe as a thief in a mill," according to the ancient saying.

And now let us go back to Johnny's father, who, having found himself a little belated after locking the mill, hurried homeward. He found the house all silent as usual, and although a thought of Johnny crossed his mind, he did not feel sufficiently anxious to go up-stairs and see if he was there quietly asleep, or even to waken Mrs. Leonard, and ask if the little fellow had come home all right. So it chanced that Johnny's friends all slumbered peacefully, unconscious of his condition, till the dawn of day.

Just in the grey light of the morning, old Christine aroused Adam, telling him that she could not sleep for thinking of his little friend; besides, she had dreamed of a

black cat, and that was always a dreadful sign.

"That comes of thinking of mice just as you went to sleep," said Adam. "Don't you know you said we must get Johnny to set his trap here? What should you dream of but cats?"

But Christine carried her point, of course, and Adam in a few moments rapped at Mr. Leonard's back door to get the key of the mill. Johanna was not up, but she heard the rap and after a few moments made her appearance in rather a dishevelled condition.

"Why, what ails you, man," she said, "to be disturbin' the rest o' dacint people in this way?"

"I just want the key to the mill," said Adam, reaching in and taking it off its accustomed nail. "The little Johnny came home all safe with his father last night, didn't he?"

"Sure an' how should I know," answered Johanna, it isn't meself that sets up till cock crowin'; an' that's the time the masther ginerally comes stealin' in, like a thafe! Why should the little lad be out till that time,

pray?" she asked, her curiosity getting the better of her desire to vindicate herself from the charge of keeping late hours.

So Adam explained the case a little.

"I'll go right and wake the folks and ask em," she said.

"Oh, no! don't!" said Adam, earnestly, "just go softly and see if he's in bed, and come and tell me;" and Adam stood leaning against the door-post while she sped away on her errand.

In less than half a minute, as it seemed to him, he was startled by an unearthly scream, which brought every body in the house to their chamber doors in an instant, only to hear a succession of lamentations howled forth by the frightened domestic. "Och, saints and angels! an' it's gone is the blessed child! Murthered and drownded he is, or maybe stolen away by gypsies! Wake up! wake up, all of yes! Och, hone, that I should see the day!"

At the first scream, Adam had rushed away towards the mill, with a face as ashen grey as his hair

"What is the matter? Oh! what is the matter, Johanna?" cried Mrs. Leonard, in wild alarm, but nothing could she make out of the poor girl's frantic exclamations until Mr. Leonard said "Johnny—"

"Gone! dead! drownded!" shrieked Johanna.

Mrs. Leonard put her hand to her head and recalled the events of the evening: "Why, John," she said, "didn't you bring Johnny home with you and put him to bed?"

"No, he came home with Adam two hours before I did," said Mr. Leonard, beginning to dress hastily.

"Oh! no, no, he didn't!" said the poor mother, trembling so violently that she could do nothing. "Run for Adam, Johanna; stop screaming and run for Adam!" she cried.

"Sure an' 'twas Adam waked me and wanted to know if Johnny was home," said Johanna growing more vehement.

There was not another word said, but in an incredibly short time Mr. Leonard was run-

ning down the street, and Harry, barefooted and hatless, rushing after him.

"Drowned! drowned!" murmured the poor mother, sinking on to her knees, while Alice tried to remember everything that had been said the evening before by Johnny, keeping back her sobs as well as she could, and holding her mother's cold hand in her own.

"I bet he's in the mill," thought Will, "and what's the use making such a row about him?" so he went back and got into bed.

Before Mr. Leonard and Harry could reach the mill, they saw Adam and Johnny turning the corner and hastening towards them. In a moment they met, and Johnny was in his father's arms, all happiness and penitence and —flour!

"You have given us a terrible fright, Johnny," said Mr. Leonard. "Take his hand, Harry, scamper home as fast as ever you can to poor mother. I'll be back soon."

Harry and Johnny fairly flew home, and they were all so overjoyed to get him safely back that they forgot to scold him one bit!

But Johnny's night in the mill wrought some perceptible changes. In the first place, it was observed that he never set any more mouse traps. I leave my readers to guess why. Johnny never told, but when good Mrs. Brethschneider (that was Christine,) asked him to come and set a trap in her pantry, he colored perceptibly, and said he "*had sold all his traps.*"

Harry used to tease him a little about his adventure, and insists to this day, that Johnny got caught in one of his own traps, and that is what destroyed his relish for future attempts at mouse catching.

The second great change in Johnny was, that his ears began to be of considerable service to him!

VIII.

THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

THESE young Leonards were a decidedly wide-awake set of young people, take them as a whole. They fairly bubbled over with ideas, and they were so sociable and talkative that they would a great deal rather have this overflow run off in a torrent of gay young chatter, than to try to keep it pent up. Johnny was the only exception to this state of feeling. Harry and Alice were half-a-dozen years older than Will, but that had by no means a repressing influence on them. Indeed it constituted one of the chief reasons why they felt that they ought to be heard. As to Will he felt that they had done six years

more talking than he had, and they ought to be willing to keep still awhile and 'et him take his turn now but seeing that they were by no means inclined to do this, he did his very best to catch up with them.

Little Rosa was a chatter-box, of course. And she had been listened to so much, and had her bright little speeches echoed and repeated, that she had very naturally, grown to think that all she had to say, which was a great deal, was of the very highest consequence, and must be heard, whether there was any opportunity or not.

So they all talked in the liveliest and most unremitting fashion; often two or three talking together, in what might be called a very elevated style, as far as pitch of voice was concerned. They talked to themselves in solitude, and when they were all together they talked to each other, and to their father and mother—any body who would listen, or who wouldn't listen—but talk they must!

Generally they were very pleasant and kind to each other, and harmonized in their views

about as well as any other five children; but there came up subjects frequently, on which they held the most opposite opinions, and held them very firmly. Then, I am sorry to say, notwithstanding all their good training, they often fell into a perfect war of words. They sometimes contradicted and disputed, and waxed so wrathful and excited, that the mother or father had to use all their parental authority to settle the disturbance! This was particularly the case between Johnny and Will. They had such entirely different temperaments, that they hardly ever saw things alike, and you see they had not lived long enough to learn that, in order to have peace, each must be willing to let the other see things in his own way. They were determined frequently to convert each other, and made the great mistake, which is often made by older people, that this could be accomplished by violent and vociferous argument.

Harry too, as I have elsewhere told, was a little bit arrogant, and thought because he was the oldest, he had a right to dictate opin-

ions to his younger brothers; while they were sturdy young democrats who refused to be ruled by Master Harry, even in a matter of opinion.

They were all blessed with good sound lungs and excellent organs of speech, so they had every facility for making themselves heard.

Then they were active and healthy, and so of course, always running about and capering around, as aimlessly and incessantly as a flock of blackbirds. The boys jumped over each other, and over the chairs and tables; and down-stairs, it was a great deal livelier than walking about like sensible young people! They chased each other round and round; they upset things, and they smashed things to pieces! They raced up-stairs and down cellar, and screamed, and hurt themselves and each other, and tore their clothes, in the usual fashion of young human beings.

They were great laughers. There was not one of them who couldn't laugh tremendously, and with very little provocation. They were

all such lovers of fun, and could say and do such immensely funny things, that sometimes it did seem as if April-fool's day lasted all the year, and giggling was the main business of their lives Alice to be sure was getting to have some grown up ways, though she cultivated them under difficulties, and Johnny couldn't compare with Will for mad-cap nonsense; but there was fun enough in Johnny even. It lay deeper, that was all.

I don't know but this may all sound like a new revelation about my Leonards, but if you have not suspected it of them before, it is only because I've been so busy telling you about other things connected with them, and of course, I couldn't tell you everything at once.

The father and mother of this noisy set of young folks liked to talk also. They frequently thought of something, at the table or elsewhere, that they would like to say to each other; and sometimes they very naturally wished to speak to the children, either in the way of advice or reproof, or perhaps, simply

in a matter of common conversation; but as you will perhaps surmise, they had to watch and wait for an opportunity. It really required considerable patience and skill to get in a word 'edgewise." The children were very affectionate. They thought they were highly favored above all the children in the world in respect to parentage. There never was such a darling mother—such a dear, kind, indulgent father, and they meant to treat them with the utmost respect. But then, were there ever children who always did as they meant to? I trow not! And these young Leonards were no exception to the rule; they very often forgot all about father and mother, and the rules of good breeding, in the tumultuous rush of their own tongues. They had always been so free and unrestrained, too, in their intercourse with their parents, that they did not feel their presence anything of a check upon them, and so far from waiting in respectful silence for them to "have their say," they went on at headlong speed with their own clatter.

Undoubtedly it would have been better if this good father and mother had been a little more exacting in this matter, and had insisted on having a good, fair share of the conversational privileges; but I'm not telling you about a model family. Even the father and mother had their frailties, and were painfully aware of them. They were improving too, with time and experience, as everybody ought.

Mrs. Leonard made up her mind, after little Rosa's shrill young voice began to add a fresh element to the domestic clamor, that something must be done about it. For instance, there must not be so much noise at the table that she and her husband would have to signal their wants to each other across the conflicting waves of sound like a pair of deaf mutes!

And the children must stop their chattering, and listen, when she or their father spoke to them. No wonder they didn't hear! She couldn't hear herself half the time! So she vigorously set about a reform. Harry and Alice were a dozen years old when she came

to the settled conclusion that they needed a little wholesome repression; and so she talked with them very seriously about it. "I cannot hope to manage the little boys," she said, "unless I have your help. If my oldest children are not careful and respectful and attentive, of course the younger ones will not be. If my Harry makes such a noise when I am talking to him that he can't hear me, and if my Alice is so busy with her own thoughts that she doesn't hear me, and so they are always excusing themselves from obedience by saying that they 'Didn't hear.' I shall expect all my flock to be both deaf and disobedient."

Harry agreed with his mother, as he generally did, and declared that it was a shame for her to be so impolitely treated. He was going to mend *his* manners. "But I declare, mother," he said, "I don't see how I'm going to know when you're talking, unless I happen to be looking at you. I wish you'd get a speaking-trumpet, like a sea captain!"

Mrs. Leonard laughed at this idea; but there certainly would be some benefit in being

able to attract attention without over-exerting her lungs. She would remember it.

Alice took the reproof more seriously. "Oh, mother!" she said, "I do wish I knew what to do with myself. Sometimes it seems as if it was all my own fault that I am so inattentive and absent-minded, and then sometimes it doesn't seem as if I was at all to blame. I wish you'd give us a lecture on ears! I'm sure we'd all listen to that."

That was another suggestion that Mrs. Leonard thought she might make do her some service. She was always on the watch for useful hints.

Will was decidedly the most heedless of the children, and the one that made the most noise. When his mother spoke to him, he frequently was making such a clatter that he really didn't hear her, or else he immediately began to make one, so that it drove all she had said right out of his mind; and so his earnest—"I didn't hears," were more frequent and emphatic than those of the other children.

Mrs. Leonard "took him in hand" after her

decision, to try and have a little more quiet in the house. She gave him quite a lecture, holding his hands in hers, and looking straight in his face to insure his attention. "Now, Will," she said, "the very next time that you tell me you didn't hear me, when I am sure that you did, only that you didn't pay attention enough to remember the fact, I shall punish you by not hearing you for the next day."

Will understood the arrangement, and he also knew that it was extremely necessary to his happiness that his mother should hear him about five hundred times a day. It was late in the afternoon when this was said to him. About five minutes afterward he rushed through the house, hotly pursued by Johnny, whose countenance indicated vengeance. The mother saw that there was serious trouble. She didn't know but blows and even bloodshed might be impending; so she called out quickly, "Stop, Johnny! Stop Will!" But, in the eagerness of the chase, her voice was unheeded. Round the house they went, and

through the room once more, hatless and breathless. "Stop, children!" again cried the mother, and this time with such force that Will stopped and took refuge behind a chair, eyeing the wrathful Johnny with mischief in every line of his face. Johnny's temper verified the adage, "Beware the anger of the dove!" for, quiet and inoffensive as he generally was, when fairly roused, it was well for his tormenter to get, at least, as strong a bulwark as a chair before him!

"Now tell me what this means, Johnny," said Mrs. Leonard. "I told you to stop when you ran through here before."

"I didn't hear you," said Johnny.

"Nor I," echoed Will.

"Well, you might have heard me. It was not the fault of my voice. Now, what has Will done, Johnny?"

"I was blowing soap-bubbles out in the yard," said Johnny. "I've been blowing em all the afternoon, and he's been plaguing me, throwing sticks at 'em every time I got a nice one, and I told him I'd lick him if he did

it again, and just now out he comes and throws another stick right through the beau tifullest great bubble you ever saw; and I chased him for it!" and Johnny looked as if he was in the direct line of his duty.

"What did you say you was going to do to him?" asked the mother.

"Lick him," answered Johnny, emphatically

"Well, considering how very dirty his hands and face are," said she, "I should think that would be quite as unpleasant for you as for him!"

They both had to laugh at this. But the mother went on: "It was very wrong in you, Will, very, indeed, to be so mischievous. I don't see any fun at all in it—not a bit; and I can see fun about as quickly as anybody I know. It just looks unkind and contemptible, and I cannot let one of my boys behave so. You may sit down here, Will, for half an hour."

"But I do not think it was wise in you, Johnny, to fly into such a passion, if you did have a good deal to vex you. You know you can

always come to me, if you think Will needs a whipping. It's a good deal easier for me to do it than you, you know, even if it was ever your place to do it; and think of rushing through my sitting-room in such a style as you were doing, fairly drowning my voice with your noise! You can go back to your soap-bubbles now, if you think you can remember what I have said."

So Johnny went out, while Will sat down for that half hour of meditation. He would very much have preferred a whipping, as his mother knew; that was the reason why she had him sit down. He wriggled and twisted, he squirmed and writhed, and went through every other contortion that was possible and yet remain seated in a chair. He complained bitterly of his treatment, whereupon his mother bade him be silent, which command he "didn't hear," as usual, until it was twice repeated. Then, words being forbidden, he vented his feelings in moans and groans, and finally in yawns and sighs and tears! But at last the half hour expired, and he was allowed

his liberty again. "Now don't disturb Johnny any more," said Mrs. Leonard, as he bounded out of the house. "No, ma'am," he answered, and was gone.

The lesson lasted him as much as an hour! At the expiration of that time he happened around in Johnny's vicinity again, and found him lying on the ground watching an ant carry a dead bug about six times as large as itself. He had taken off his hat in order to get a more convenient position, and it lay beside him on the grass. What wretched spirit of mischief possessed Will that he should seize the hat and give it a throw that sent it upon to the wood-shed roof? But that was just what he did. Johnny rose up calmly and went in and reported the case at headquarters. "Tell him to come here," said the mother. So Will again was brought before the court.

"What is the matter with you to be so naughty again?" said the mother. "Didn't I tell you to be sure and not disturb Johnny again to-night?"

"I didn't hear you," said Will.

"You mean you did not heed me," said Mrs. Leonard. "Now, Will, you may have your supper and go to-bed, and to-morrow you will find your mother very hard of hearing!"

It was a full hour before his usual bed-time, but after his bread and butter had been eaten, he retired to the only place where he was ever really quiet and out of mischief.

"I wonder how it'll seem to have mother not hear me to-morrow," he thought—"awful, I guess! I wish I could go a visiting!" He went to sleep speculating about it.

Early in the morning, before he was up, he thought about it again, and hoped she would forget it. Any way, he hoped she would let him go visiting, so directly after he saw her in the morning he began to test her. "Say, mother, may I go in and see Jimmy Long to-day? You know he staid here all day last week."

But Mrs. Leonard looked right over his head, and evidently *remembered.* He did not return to repeat the request, and sat down to breakfast in a little more serious frame of mind

than usual. His father helped him to his usual supply of food, and his mother poured his tumbler of milk, but pretty soon, when he wanted a little more, she "didn't hear" him; although she had just heard a similar request from Johnny, with no difficulty whatever!

After prayers, Will forgot himself and rushed up to her to know if he might go with Johnny after strawberries, but could get no answer. He did not dare to go without leave, so he went out in the wood-shed, feeling rather neglected and miserable, and began to whittle. He worked away awhile, trying to cheer himself up, when away went his knife into his finger. The blood ran and Will screamed. Usually his mother would have rushed to the rescue, but this time she did not seem to have any ear for his distress. Then he ran in and put his finger into a wash-basin of water that stood in the sink, and called to mother to please come with a rag and tie it up. Strange to say, she did not come, and he had to put up with the kind but clumsy ministrations of Johanna.

All day long the trial lasted. It seemed to Will as if he never wanted his mother half so many times before. When he hurt himself or had any misfortune, such as were constantly befalling him, he had always been in the habit of running to his mother for sympathy and comfort, and she had never failed him; but to-day she was so indifferent to his woes!

Then it was one of his distinguishing traits to be always wanting something. If "discontent is immortality," as the old poet sings, surely Will was an immortal being! "Mother" was the natural person to be appealed to either for supplies or permissions. Dear me! what a calamity it was to Will to have that source and fountain-head of favors suddenly vanish! There she sat, to be sure, serene and sweet as usual, sewing or reading, or playing with the pretty little year-old Rosa; but she might as well have been a statue, so far as Will was concerned! It took him nearly all day to really find it out; he couldn't get used to such a novel situation. But in the middle of the afternoon, when he came in all eager-

ness to ask some question, or present a petition, he stopped short before the "Oh, mother!" was fairly out of his lips, and retired in disgust and dismay. He did not forget again, but wandered around the yard, trying to be as little disconsolate as possible, but feeling as if something had gone out of his life. He played with Johnny far more quietly and amiably than usual, and the evening came soon to his relief. His mother went up to bed with him, and allowed her ears to be unstopped, while he poured out a torrent of talk about the day's experiences. He still lisped a little, especially if he was excited and talking rapidly, so to-night he closed his remarks by saying, with his arms around his mother's neck, "Now, mamma," (the children all called her mamma when they were little, and when they were particularly affectionate in after years,) "pleathe don't ever go and be deaf again; it ith motht ath bad ath being dead!" and the mother assured him she never would if he would be a good boy and listen when she spoke to him, and never say he "didn't hear

when he did hear, but didn't try to remember it!

Of course Will wasn't cured, but he certainly was somewhat benefited.

It was only two or three days after this that Johnny spent his night in the mill, and then the mother thought she would deepen and strengthen the impressions made on him, and improve Will's soberer mood also, by following Alice's suggestion, and give them all a lecture on *ears*, which she accordingly did. She announced to the little folks one morning that she would play lecture that evening, and she would expect them all to be present, and with their ears in the best possible condition. Her lecture would be brief, but it was on a vastly important subject, and she would try and make it as interesting as possible. The lecture would commence at precisely ten minutes after Rosa was tucked up in her little crib, and the audience were requested to be punctual, and on their best behavior.

So that evening they were all seated in the parlor at the right time, and in the gayest of

spirits. Indeed Will's were too exuberant, and Alice took him in charge; invited him to sit by her through the lecture, and kept him in order by various little womanly devices.

Now let us listen to the lecture.

IX.

MRS. LEONARD'S LECTURE.

"WHEN a young orator makes his first public address it is often called his 'Maiden speech.' Well, this is my maiden lecture, and I'm very glad I have so small and so friendly an audience. But I'm going to have my lecture so informal, that I guess we'll call it a talk. I shall ask questions and so may you.

"I'm going to talk about *Ears*, and in the first place, Will may tell me what ears are for."

Will being thus publicly called upon, colored a little, but answered promptly, "to hear with."

"That is it precisely," said the mother "they are to hear *with*, but did you ever think they are just that, and nothing more? What do you think about it, Harry? Do ears hear?"

"Why yes, mother! No, I don't know as they do, either; but it seems just as if they did."

"Yes, it seems so," said Mrs. Leonard, "it seems as if our eyes see, and our tongues taste, our noses smell, our fingers touch, and our ears hear; but after all, if we think carefully, we shall see that these things are only instruments—curious and wonderful instruments—used by the mysterious mind within us. The eye does not see any more than a telescope through which we look can itself see. We see through it, that is all. The ear does not hear any more than an ear trumpet hears. It is only an instrument to help the hearing."

At this point Mrs. Leonard opened a little drawer in the table, and took out a speaking trumpet, with which she illustrated her mean-

ing. It was passed about among the audience, and experimented with, in a manner that threatened to bring the lecture to a disorderly end. So the mother took possession of it again, and the children all agreed that although it undoubtedly might be a useful instrument, it certainly couldn't itself hear! And Mrs. Leonard resumed her lecture. "Nothing could be more wisely and skillfully adapted to its use than these ears of ours. They do not strike us at first, perhaps, as being so marvellously and beautifully made as the eye, but there is really just as much to admire. The part that we see is called the external ear, and as you all know, there is as much difference in the shape of people's ears as there is in their eyes. Here are Harry's for instance; they are small and with well-defined lobes. Here are Alice's a little rounder and thinner. Here are Johnny's, large enough to show that he is generous, as the old proverb asserts; and here are Will's, standing out from his head more than any of the rest, as if they wanted to catch every bit of sound

there was going—alert ears, like those of a young animal—he ought to hear better than any of us, if the inner part of his ears follows the same rule. How does it happen that *he* ever says, 'I didn't hear?' Some people think there is a great deal of character expressed in the ear, a delicate small transparent ear, showing refinement and delicacy of temperament, while a thick, ill-shaped ear, indicates a coarse unrefined character. I do not know how this may be, but we all like to see a well-formed ear, just as well as any other shapely and beautiful thing, and if we have them we will be thankful; but if we haven't we must be sure and have such lovely and beautiful characters that nobody can make any theories out of our ears, like the one I have mentioned!

"This outside ear has a number of curious turns you notice, all evidently made to catch sounds and turn them in the right direction to go into the inner part of the ear. The little tube which goes into your head has short hairs guarding it to keep out particles of dust,

and there is a bitter wax supplied to repe insects. But this tube only goes a little way before it is crossed with a delicate membrane, which you have heard called the drum of the ear. It is in many respects like the end of a drum, vibrating or trembling when it is struck by those motions in the air, which we call sounds. Then just within this drum of the ear, are four delicately formed bones, which lie in a sort of chain, and seem designed to carry the sound farther on; and then, innermost of all, and most wonderful, and least understood, is a little chamber, all lined with an exquisitely sensitive nerve spread out over it, and supplied with curious winding tubes or channels, that are no doubt of the greatest service in conveying sound, but about whose exact use we are ignorant, as we are about most of the mysterious processes of the body. Now you may all come and look at this picture of an ear that I have here, and where all the curious organs are plainly shown."

When they had all looked, and questioned a little more, the mother went on again:

"You see Nature has provided us with such a complicated and perfect little machine for catching sounds, that there isn't the least excuse in the world if we fail to hear, while these machines are in good order, as they are, with most of us, particularly in youth. Some people are born deaf—shut out from the delightful world of sounds, and, never being able to hear any language, they have no means of learning to speak, and so are not only deaf but dumb. Poor unfortunates, for whom we should have the deepest and tenderest sympathy. Elderly people, too, frequently lose their hearing, at least, in a measure, and there are many who, through disease or injury, become partially deaf,—to all of whom we should be most considerate and kind. But, as I was saying, we, who have perfect ears, have no excuse for not using them and making the most of them.

"They are placed at the most convenient point on our heads, one on each side, and so, with the help of the quick motions of the neck able to catch sounds from every direction.

"This much has kindly nature done for almost all the human family, but, like our other senses and faculties, our sense of hearing can be improved and cultivated. Now, see if you can think of some illustration of this. What kind of people hear best?"

"Indians," said Harry, promptly. "I read the other day how they put their ears to the ground, and hear the tramping of horses or of herds of buffaloes miles away."

"Musicians," said Alice, "I think have their ears in quite as good training as the Indians. I have heard of ever so many who could learn a tune hearing it once; and how quickly piano-tuners notice if a key doesn't make the right sound, when nobody else would hear any wrong sound at all."

"Yes," said Mrs. Leonard; "those are very good illustrations. Now, what is Johnny thinking about?"

"About blind Jimmy. He just beats everything to hear. He can tell all of us boys by our step—he is always *harking*."

"So is Miss Nelson, our teacher," said

Will; "she can hear a fellow whisper clear away in the back part of the room."

They all laughed, and Mrs. Leonard said. 'Teachers have to use their ears if anybody does. But, Johnny, I think, has mentioned the class of people whose ears have reached the utmost perfection. The blind have to be so dependent upon the sense of hearing that they make it do double duty. Their ears have to be eyes, too. How many of them are wonderful musicians! There are many almost incredible stories told of their powers of hearing. They learn to distinguish all their friends as readily by their voices as we do ours by their appearance. They will remember a voice for years. They can tell a person's height by his voice, or the size and shape of a room by the sound of voices in it, and know when they are approaching an object by the peculiar echo. Indeed, it is impossible to set a limit to their hearing abilities. Let us all keep our ears in good training. A person who can hear perfectly has an immense advantage over one who cannot.

"Now, as to sounds. You all know just what the word sound means, and so I will not spend any time to-night in explaining how sounds are produced. I will only say that the way they are carried to the ear is by a jarring of the air; little waves of sound go rolling along, just as the waves do on water when you throw a stone into it. I say, for instance, 'Do you hear me, Will?' My voice sets the waves in the air going, and, in an instant, they have reached Will's ear, are caught in the little whirls that make up his outer ear, sent rapidly into the passage leading into his head, strike on the membrane there, and set it to vibrating, and so the telegraphic message of sounds is sent along that little chain of bones that lead to the inner ear. Reaching that, they are carried along the little channels that go winding about in that mysterious place, and, lastly, are caught by the delicate nerve spread there to receive them, and sent, at lightning speed, along its course to Will's busy brains! We can follow its course no longer; but, in some wonderful way, the brain says to

Will's soul—which is the real Will—what we see is only the house that holds the true Will! —the words that I spoke, 'Do you hear me, Will?'

"But how much quicker all this telegraphing is done than I can tell you! The words are scarcely out of my lips before they have reached his mind, so perfect are all the arrangements for our talking with each other.

"There is still another remarkable thing about our hearing. The ear may do its work faultlessly, and yet we may not hear. Think how many, many sounds we have about us that we take no notice of! Do we hear the clock when it strikes, or the dropping of the eaves on a rainy day, or any other constant sound? The people who live by the ocean do not hear its roar, nor does you father hear the ceaseless whirring of the mill. These sounds are heard in one sense; that is, the ear does its part perfectly, but the mind within does not attend to its announcements. And now we come to the most important part of my talk with you, which is Attention. We often

call it listening. *We hear when we listen.* If I tell Will that the next time the clock strikes, I'll give him a new top, he would be very sure to hear it, because he would be listening for it. More wonderful still, if I should say, 'Alice, if you will wake up at four o'clock to-morrow morning and come to me, I will give you that book of poems you have been wanting!' At just four o'clock to-morrow morning she would be pretty sure to hear the clock, for even through the night's sleep her soul would be partly conscious, and would sit listening in that little innermost chamber of her ear!

"We can fairly lock the door of our ears if we choose, and give our whole minds to thought or to reading, or some occupation. You all know how it is in school. Classes may be reciting, and there may be a great deal of noise and confusion, but if your thoughts are all on the lesson you are studying, the sounds do not disturb you; at least, they need not. Yes, this gift that we have of listening, or not listening, is the most important power of all, for here is where our moral power

comes in. We can hear always what we deeply feel that we ought to hear. Of course there are temptations enough to encounter here, as in every other effort to do right, but we can resist temptation, if we only try hard enough. We must ask help from Him who 'giveth to all men liberally;' and then we must try. 'Heaven helps him who helps himself.'

"What my children need, in order to hear better, is a stronger feeling that *it is very wrong not to hear.* You would then determine not to let yourselves get so absorbed in anything that you could fail to hear your mother or your father's voice. You would be surprised yourselves to see the effects of a little strong resolution in this matter. If you really love your mother, as I know you do, you ought to dread giving her trouble and pain; and you ought to think what a vast amount of unnecessary talking she has to do every day just to have her dear boys and girls hear her. Then your next thought would be, 'This shall not be so any longer. My mother's comfort and happiness are too dear to me to be sacrificed just

by my carelessness. I'll keep my ears open and my mind on the alert after this.' Then, if you cared enough about it to keep your resolution, what do you think the result would be? Why, I should have the most surprising and joyful change in my life that ever befel me!

"I read the other day somewhere a queer little estimate of how much it would save the people who write and speak the English language, if they could just spell words as they are pronounced, and so leave out all the superfluous letters. It was really wonderful how much time it would save, and 'time is money' you know to us all. I can't remember the figures exactly, but the yearly saving was away up in the hundred thousands! Now I wonder how much money I should save by not having to give my orders or requests but just once! I guess I should grow rich by it! At any rate, I know I should make a great saving in the way of lungs and muscles and nerves, and these are very weighty matters to me and my children—'More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold'!

"And now," said Mrs. Leonard, rising, and bowing with a great deal of make-believe formality, "my thanks are due to my audience for their continued and courteous attention."

Will gave a soft little sigh of relief, and took a roll on the carpet to see if he hadn't lost the use of his muscles, while Johnny remained seated, plunged in meditation.

But Harry cried out, "Hold on a minute, mother! now suppose there's only one of us really wants to listen to you and keeps *harking* all the time, day and night (it'll be Alice most likely!) and the rest of us make such an awful clatter that she can't hear, if she tries ever so hard—what's going to be done about that?"

"Well," said the mother, laughing, "I'm going to keep my speaking-trumpet within reach for a while, and I shall thunder such an order for silence in your ears once in a while as will 'give you pause,' as Shakspeare says.

"But I am building a great deal of hope on your growing older and not enjoying such noisy times yourselves. Every month, now, I can see that you and Alice and Johnny, too,

are growing to care more for quiet pleasures when you are within doors. You take more pleasure in listening to the conversation of older people, and so I hope will be less anx ious to talk yourselves. I really hope our days of 'awful clatter,' as Harry says, are about over; and so I can soon make Will a present of the speaking-trumpet and give up lecturing!"

Since the mother is so brave and hopeful herself, shall we not be hopeful, too? No doubt that "lecture" did the young Leonards a vast amount of good.

FINIS.