

would you believe it? that tall, dark man burst out into a loud laugh. I felt ready to knock him down. I knew how my stupidity would be gayly discussed at that breakfast-table before her, and I felt my discomfiture and humiliation deeply; but this open merriment at my expense maddened me.

A strange calm succeeded this storm. It was caused by some words uttered by my tormentor.

"You really must forgive me; I could not refrain from laughing. My name is Robinson. Your friend, Mr. Robertson, lives in one of the other houses. We frequently get parcels and letters, and even callers coming to the wrong house; but, in all my experience, we have never had so amusing a mistake so early in the day as this one."

"Now this explanation toned down my anger considerably; but the words which followed were like balm to my troubled heart.

"Mr. Robertson will have finished breakfast by now. I cannot think of allowing you to go. Do me the favor of remaining here and breakfasting with us this morning."

So saying, he took my hat out of my hand and led me into the room again. Of course it did not need much persuasion to make me stop. Two minutes before I had been ready to knock this man over; I now thought him the kindest and most considerate fellow in the world.

Of course the breakfast was delightful. I found Mr. Robinson and his wife sensible, genial, kind-hearted people. I found their niece even more sensible, more genial and kind-hearted than they were, and when, after breakfast, I accompanied her and Mr. Robinson into their pretty flower-garden, I received from her a rose-bud for my button-hole, which I kept for some years afterwards. When saying good-by I was perplexed by thinking how I should manage to see her again; it must be contrived somehow, I mentally resolved. Upon returning to town I lost no time in explaining "the situation" to my worthy employer, Mr. Robertson, who rallied me good-naturedly upon the mistake, and upon what the consequences might be. Next week I was invited to a picnic at Mr. Robinson's, and went not only to it, but likewise to Mr. Robinson's house again and again before his niece returned to her home.

Four years have passed since that invitation to breakfast was given me, and that "fairy-like girl" is now my wife. That local milkman, bless him, got a handsome "tip" upon our wedding-day.

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES.

"Little Annie Wilder has joined the church," said Mrs. Fielding to her friend Mrs. Brewster.

"Joined the church! Well, I must say I don't believe in filling the church with children, and such material too. I don't believe Annie Wilder knows how to read."

"And her mother is such a low-lived termagant," added the first speaker.

"Yes, and that isn't the worst of it; she takes a drop too much, I am told."

"Say a great many drops, and you will get nearer the truth," was the reply.

This bit of dialogue took place in Mrs. Fielding's pretty summer parlor in a certain suburb.

It happened that not long thereafter Annie Wilder came to Mrs. Fielding and asked for work. She was set to washing dishes and cleaning vegetables, and a most efficient little handmaiden she proved. She was gay as a bird, warbling snatches of hymn and song as she hurried from one task to another.

One day Mrs. Fielding said:

"Annie, I wonder you are not more serious since you joined the church. It is a great responsibility to be a church member, and religion is a serious thing."

Annie paused in her work, looked at the lady with her sweet, truthful eyes, and said:

"I don't know what you mean, ma'am."

"I feared as much," said Mrs. Fielding. "Child do you know what it means to join the church?"

"It means being on Jesus' side," said Annie, her face radiant; "and O, I love him so that I can't help singing!"

"But," said Mrs. Fielding, "don't you have any fears, any struggles?"

"Why should I, ma'am?" asked the child, her clear eyes opening wide.

The lady said no more, but she shook her head ominously as she walked away.

The hot weather came on; family trials were onerous; nobody had an appetite; the children were cross; papa was critical. One morning Mrs. Fielding felt particularly out of condition. The sun, but a little way on his journey, shone with noonday intensity. Not a leaf stirred. The breakfast was tasteless. The flies were aggravating. I don't know how it happened, but it only takes a little spark to make an explosion when the train is laid. Some unguarded word was spoken, a temper blazed; a child was slapped and sent away from the table; the husband remonstrated; sharp words followed; there was recrimination, tears, a downright quarrel.

"O, the trouble of living!" groaned Mrs. Fielding, when husband and children were out of the house, and she was left alone. "I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it!" and she gave herself up to hysterical sobbing.

By and by, when the storm was a little cleared away, came Annie, her face serene, her eyes soft and untroubled.

"Please excuse me ma'am, for being late," she said, "but mother was bad this morning and wouldn't let me come."

"What is the matter with her?"

The child blushed.

"She has been drinking, I suppose," said Mrs. Fielding.

Annie raised her arm at that minute, and there on the soft, fair flesh was the livid mark of a blow.

"What is that?"

"Please don't ask me, ma'am; it is nothing."

"Your mother has been beating you—and what a face! You look as if you hadn't a trouble in the world. How can you bear such things?"

"I keep saying 'em over, ma'am."

"Saying what over?"

"The charity verses. I said 'em so fast I didn't hear mother very plain."

"What do you mean?"

"Love suffereth long and is kind—isn't it beautiful, ma'am?" and the child's face glowed. "And [then when I started to come here," she continued, "I couldn't help feeling bad and lonesome, and I thought of another verse; 'Lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world.' Always, ma'am, think of that! It means Jesus, ma'am; and O, I love him so!"

Mrs. Fielding went to her own room, dumb before the wisdom of an ignorant child. Presently Annie's voice came floating out on the stifling air. She was singing, "His loving kindness, O how great."—*Christian Union*.

Baby is Dead.

"Baby is dead!" Three little words passing along the line, copied somewhere and soon forgotten. But after all was quiet again I leaned my head upon my hand and fell into a deep reverie of all that those words may mean.

Somewhere—a dainty form, still and cold, unclasped by mother's arms to-night. Eyes that yesterday were as bright and blue as skies in June, dropped to-night beneath white lids that no voice can raise again. Two soft hands, whose rose-leaf fingers were wont to wander lovingly around mother's neck and face, loosely holding white buds, quietly folded in coffin rest. Soft lips, yesterday rippling with laughter, sweet as woodland brook-falls, gay as trill of forest bird, to-night unresponsive to kiss or call of love. A silent home—the patter of baby feet forever hushed—a cradle-bed unpressed. The shoes half-worn—dainty garments—shoulder-knots of blue to match those eyes of yesterday, folded with aching heart away. A tiny mound, snow-covered, in some quiet graveyard. A mother's groping touch in uneasy slumber, for the fair head that shall never rest upon her bosom. The low sob, the bitter tear, as broken dreams awake to sad reality. The hopes of future years wrecked, like fair ships that suddenly go down in sight of land. The watching of other babies, dimpled, laughing, strong, and this one gone! The present agony of grief, the future emptiness of heart, all held in those three little words, "Baby is dead!"

Indeed, it is well that we can copy and soon forget the words so freighted with woe to those who receive and send them. And yet it cannot harm us now and then to give a tender thought to those whom our careless pen-stroke is preparing such a weight of grief.—*Tel. Operator*.