

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

BE FIRST.

BY EMMA F. WYMAN.

What your conscience bids you do,
Hasten to obey it.
Evil promptings soon would win,
If you should delay it.

If a quarrel should arise,
Be the first to leave it.
Be the first to pardon ask,
Be the first to give it.

If to others evil comes,
Do your best to stay it.
If they need a helpful word,
Be the first to say it.

If a toilsome duty calls,
Put your effort to it.
If you see a work to do,
Be the first to do it.

If a slander should arise,
From your lips repeat it.
But if any good you know,
Be the first to tell it.

Conscience holds the prize of peace;
Do well, and obtain it.
Duty gives the crown of joy,
Faithful be, and gain it.

TO BE CALLED FOR.

By ELLERAY LAKE, Author of "Longleat."

CHAPTER II.

Juques: What stature is she of?
Orlando: Just as high as my heart.

—"As YOU LIKE IT."

"Good morning, missy."

The Squire's voice rang out pleasantly as he descended the stairs and saw the little maid gazing curiously up at the "man in armour." Her tiny hands were clasped behind her.

"Good morning, sir," she responded, with a quaint little courtsey that surprised and pleased him.

"Ready betimes! Now you will like your breakfast."

"Yes, and I liked my bed," she added.

His eyes twinkled. "That's all right," he answered. "We will have it at once. 'Man-ners,' he said to the servant in attendance, 'put that high music-chair for the child. She's rather small for her age. Eh! think so?'"

"She is, rather, sir," answered the man, as he lifted Minnie on to the chair. Then he handed her her cup, some ham, an egg, and satisfied himself that she had all she required. Then he stirred the fire, and left the room for a few minutes.

The Squire had a newspaper propped up before him, and there was silence. Presently he looked at Minnie. "Why, child, how is this? You are not eating."

"You have not said grace," she answered, in a tone that, as he afterwards said, he "felt to be reproving."

"Oh!" He muttered a few words, to which she responded, with closed eyes and folded hands, a devout "Amen!"

"Good child!" said the Squire. "Now get your breakfast."

"We haven't had prayers," she remarked, presently.

"Have those at night," said the Squire, shortly. "Too busy in the mornings."

A long silence again. During it the little girl was evidently meditating deeply, though once or twice she seemed on the point of speaking.

"Is God busy in the morning?" she asked, at last, so suddenly that the old gentleman received quite a little shock.

"God busy! Bless me, child! What a notion! Of course not!"

"Well, we always have prayers both times," she said.

"Of course; quite proper in a parson's family, quite proper!"

"We ain't a family," she replied, sharply and shortly.

"Eh, what! Not a family! What are you then?"

The Squire's voice was at roar-pitch; and the child, thinking that he was deaf, raised hers.

"We ain't a family!" she shouted.

"Then what, in the name of confusion, are you?"

"He always calls us 'units gathered,'" she replied.

"Who calls you 'units gathered?'" asked the Squire, in astonishment.

"The curate, of course! We don't like him very much; but he comes to read prayers morning and night. Nurse don't like him much either," she remarked, after a short pause.

"The curate comes to read prayers for you?"

Minnie nodded.

"Well," ejaculated the Squire, after a few moments of astonished reflection, "upon my soul! I never heard anything to equal this. Why, child, he might be a bishop."

Of course, the Squire was thinking of, and alluding to, her father.

"No; oh, no! he will never be that," said the child emphatically, shaking her head "because, nurse says, he is but a poor stick, at his best; and that he has no influence!"

"Well, I'll be shot!" exclaimed the Squire, in a passion now; "I just tell you what it is, child. This nurse of yours is a downright piece of impudence; nothing less. 'Poor stick,' indeed!"

"Oh, no, grandpa; she isn't, she is very good. I am so sorry for her. She has so much to do. All the mending—and—and—oh, lots of things!"

"Should think so, with that tribe," the Squire growled.

"Yes, indeed; and I help her all I can. She was really glad, I believe, when I had measles; because I couldn't go to Canada, then you know; it would not have been possible."

"To Canada?" shouted the Squire, staring at the child.

"Yes; some of us, who were very poor, you know, were to go."

The Squire rose from his chair hastily, his face flushed. At that moment the butler entered with a telegram.

"A telegram!" exclaimed his master. "Dear me! I hope nothing is wrong with Madam." He read in a low tone, but audibly, "'Am returning on Wednesday, bringing Gertrude. Arrived at the Vicarage last night.' That's all right!" said the Squire, with a sigh of relief. "You will have a playfellow, my dear; that will be nice."

"I don't care for Gertrude, grandpa—at least, not much. I like the boys better; they are more good-natured."

The Squire's eyes twinkled. "A true feather of the old hen's wing," he said to himself; but aloud, "Nay, nay, missy. Must not say so to grandame. She is very, very particular. Won't do at all."

"Is she?" said the child, with most amusing coolness. "Well, we are used to that. You can't think what a fussy old thing the vicar's wife is when she comes into the schoolroom. Nurse says she is a 'regular fidget.' She is, too. I don't like her one bit."

"Confound that nurse! Look here, child; if you'll promise not to name that woman again, I will give you a bright gold sovereign. There, now."

"I couldn't promise. It would be bribery and corruption," she said, gravely shaking her head.

"What do you know about bribery and corruption?" he asked, in astonishment, laughing heartily.

"I know all about it, because, when nurse wanted a better place once, old Mrs. Aylesford, who mended lace, got it; and nurse said it was quite through bribery and corruption. So I asked what she meant, and she told me it was 'giving something to get something.'"

"Humph! Well, Minnie, you give money to get things."

"That is business," she answered, scornfully.

"You are a caution!" thought the Squire; but he said, "Would you like a ride on the pony, my dear?"

"Very much, if quite convenient," she said, demurely.

The expression of the Squire's face was droll, as he rang the bell, and then gave orders for Mary to come.

"Can you find a riding-skirt for the child?" he asked, when the maid appeared.

"Yes, sir. Madam had one made to be ready against missy came."

"Put it on her, and be quick," the Squire said.

Very soon they returned, and Mary said, "It just fits her, sir; quite a wonderful guess."

"Yes," said her master; "but isn't there a riding-cap?"

"She will not wear the 'Tam O'Shanter,' sir."

"No," said the child; "we always wear hoods, because things get in our ears, and it's troublesome, nurse says."

"Things in your ears!" said Mary, puzzled; "Do you mean earwigs?" shouted the Squire.

"Of course not!" answered Minnie, scornfully. "I mean ear-aches, and things; and they are troublesome. And a waste of onions, too!" she added.

"Troublesome, indeed!" snapped the Squire; "of course, to her, the hussy! 'Waste of onions!' What next, I wonder! Come along, child."

He went to the hall door. Minnie followed, with Mary. As they stood in the porch, she said to the little girl, "Can you ride well, Miss Minnie?"

"I think so; at least pretty well. I used to ride on Dobbin sometimes, but not often, because if he fetched coals it dirtied my frock, and nurse was cross; and he generally *did* fetch coals or chips."

"Fetched coals!" exclaimed the two listeners.

The child nodded, and said, "When nurse ran short in her sitting-room we did get her some. We had commoner stuff in the big rooms, of course," she added, parenthetically.

"I never heard the like in my life!" ejaculated the Squire.

Very soon they were mounted and off. The groom and Mary stood watching them until they disappeared down the avenue.

"She's the quaintest piece I ever came across," said Mary. "If there isn't a shine betwixt her and Madam before long I shall wonder."

"She ain't a bit like either Squire or Madam," said the groom.

"No; I daresay she takes after her mother."

"What's she like?" he asked Mary.

"Eh? I don't know. She's never been here. You know, Mr. Harold married without them knowing, and they've never had anything to do with him since. It's all along of Squire's last illness as they've come round; and Madam was allowed to go to the Vicarage. But it beats me why the child was sent. And now master says Madam is coming with another of them! Well, the more the merrier, say I; for the Hall is dull enough at times. But if this Miss Gertrude is like her sister——" Mary shrugged her shoulders, and went in.

"You don't feel timid, do you child?" asked the Squire.

"Oh dear no, sir!" Minnie drew herself up, and her pink cheeks flushed pinker—her dark eyes grew larger and brighter.

"She'll do mischief when she's a bit older," thought the Squire, with pride. "But it beats me whom she takes after: it must be her mother, I suppose."

Then the Squire frowned, sighed, and for some time rode in silence.

You are very quiet, said the little girl.