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THERE IS BLACK IN THE BLUE OF THE SKY.

BY LUCY LARCOM.

An artist one day at his easel stood,
And sketched with a pencil free,
The gold of the meadow, the green of the wood,
And the purple and gray of the sea.
A child looked over, a little way back,
And questioned the artist, "Why
Do you mix with your color a touch of
black,
When you paint the blue in the sky?"

"Only because I see it, my child;
I am painting the sky as it is;"
And he softly said to himself, and smiled:
"It is one of earth's mysteries;
Not the lily itself wears a perfect white;
Nor the red rose an unmixed dye;
There is light in shadows, and shadow
in light,
And black in the blue of the sky."

There are films of nature everywhere,
To sooth and refresh our sight,
For mortal eyes were not made to bear
The dazzle of shadeless light.
Our consolation and our complaint—
Awaking both smile and sigh;
There are human faults in the holiest
saint;
There is black in the blue of the sky.

When then? Are the skies indeed not
Lilies white, nor the roses red? [blue,
Shall we doubt whether ever the crystal
dew
Drops pearls on the path we tread?
We may dwell where there is no flure
in the air,
No veil over earth, by-and-by,
But good is good always and everywhere
Though black may steal into bluesky.

We have read from the leaves of an old-
fashioned book,
Of one in the glory unseen,
Whose gaze the poor seraphim dare not
brook,
Before whom the heavens are unclean,
And the hope of immortals is in the
thought
Of a Truth and a Love so high
That possible evil sullies them not;
No black in the blue of the sky."

For The Acadian.

PICNICS.

Picnics, haying, sour milk—that is
our "bill of fare" now. I call mostly
for picnics. They are a good thing in
a place. Yesterday the greatest one
of the season was held; it was a leap-
year one. Any girl could go if she
would take a basket, and any boy if he
wouldn't. The picnic was a success,
and that aint what picnics are always.

A picnic often means—carrying a basket of dishes and provisions three quarters of a mile to a railway station, then riding fourteen miles in a car so crowded that you would die if you had room, walking a mile and a half with the same basket to some pine trees, eating on last years leaves, going home in the rain and telling what a lovely time you had and getting cordially jawed for bringing home a spoon that did not belong to you, and leaving five plates that did. The amusements yesterday were boating, swinging, dancing and doing nothing; and each received due attention. The swinging and doing nothing were like what you will find at any picnic; the boating and dancing, such as are found where water and plat-forms are. The dance was the most attractive amusement of the day. A dance always has attraction in it; it also has a considerable of contact. There are some things, such as carrying gates the last day of October, playing dominoes, and getting a twenty cent piece for a quarter, I never could see any fun in; but in several things, and dancing is one of them, I can see fun. I believe it to be the funniest amusement known. It makes a person feel happier and tireder than carrying water or doing an errand 'for mother' can ever do. The dancers of this community are perfect. They are at home on the platform, and there is no place like home. It is a pretty sight to see a flock of girls and as many boys, to the music of the violin, slide in and out among each other for a while, then fall into each other's arms and swing and canter and whirl, then change partners and swing and canter and whirl until the music stops. Some people object to dancing; they say there is too much hugging in it. But it seems to me that hugging is the life of it; exclude it and the dance dies. Hugging under certain restrictions is a good thing, and it is no more harm to hug in the dance than in the sleigh or at the garden gate. Shortly after our picnic opened a man with a "wheel of fortune" appeared on the ground. And such chances for making a fortune! Anyone who would put ten cents into this wheel the probabilities were that it would come out a fifty cent piece. There were also probabilities that he would lose his ten cents. These last probabilities turned

out to be very reliable. The wheel would have been very popular if it had acted differently. If it had given fifty cents for every ten the picnic would not have been out yet, and would have been a favorite with everyone. The man was a fine fellow and appeared disappointed that the wheel didn't act more in accordance with the wishes of the people. At five o'clock the baskets were opened and eating began a quarter after. Everything gave way to the meal: the "fiddle and the bow" were "hung up," the boxes of the swing were vacated, and the boats tied to the old bent tree at the head of the lake. Reclining on the moss and ants, in the shadows of the maples, the forest at our backs with its trees of every size and shape, and its winding cattle paths and blue-berry bushes; at our feet, the lake, its quiet water fringed with lilies and shadows of trees and shrubbery, and the sun overhead trying to peep through the foliage as if to smile on us, we presented quite a picturesque appearance. At the falling of the dew we adjourned to meet again at any given time.

MARTYRS.

The death of an obscure man, unknown outside of the quiet inland town in which he lived, makes it fit for us to tell the story of a life of heroic self-sacrifice.

The wife of a Virginia planter died in 1830, leaving one child, a boy of nine, whom we shall here call Mark. He showed a remarkable talent for mechanics and mathematics, and it was his father's wish and the boy's passionate hope that he should be educated as a civil engineer, and go out from the dull farm-life to find his proper work in the world.

The father married again. Three sons were born before the mother, in a sudden fit of mania, took her own life. It was then discovered that her family inherited suicidal insanity, which usually developed itself soon after maturity.

The father died just when Mark—a strong, healthy, happy young fellow—was about to enter eagerly on the practice of his profession. An attractive career and a fine prospect of success waited for him. But the oldest son of

the second marriage was just approaching manhood. He was of a sensitive organization, needing constant care.

Mark, taking counsel only of himself, declined an appointment as civil engineer that had been offered him, and remained on the plantation.

The work of a farmer was uncongenial to him, but he made a home for his brother, and by his constant, watchful care held the incipient insanity at bay. The brother died of consumption after he had attained manhood.

All of Mark's friends now believed that he would go out to live his own life, and do the work for which he was so well fitted. But the younger boys had reached the critical age. Again he remained at home, not a successful farmer, perhaps, but filling the part of both father and mother to his brothers.

He did not avert their terrible fate. One became a feeble, morbid monomaniac. The other, a clever, scholarly man, had occasional violent attacks of frenzy. It would have been possible at any time for Mark to place them in an asylum, or put them in the care of a paid keeper. He chose rather to give up his own life wholly to them, guarding them strictly, but developing in them while sane all the capacities of usefulness and happiness which God had given them.

He never married. He was not willing to bring a wife and children into such a home.

He outlived his brothers but a year or two. He had built no bridges nor railways, and hence his friends thought his real work never done. But he died honored and beloved, a noble man, whose gentle, benignant influence was felt throughout the whole community.

We name those Christian saints who were burned and torn to pieces by wild beasts in Rome. They gave their bodies for their faith. But there are in many a household obscure men and women who silently sacrifice their hopes, their ambitions, their talents, to duty; to the daily, patient care of an invalid, or of a helpless family of children, or of some selfish profligate.

Is it not true that the noble army of martyrs praise God now, as in the early ages?

Be not simply good—be good for something.