

Bob seems anxious to refresh his memory, for he turns to "The Merchant of Venice," and begins to puzzle over its contents. He spells out a good many proper names for me to pronounce, otherwise he pursues his way unassisted, his brow contracting more and more. At last, with a gesture of disapproval, he thrusts the book from him.

"Cousin Jean," he says, after a moment's wistful pause, "you tell stories a lot better than Mr. Shakespeare."

I am prevented from the possibly fatal effect of such a compliment by suddenly observing what might have ended in a fatality for the baby. After her interest in her fingers and toes (generally her most amusing toys) had somewhat waned, she had developed an astonishing interest in our country's politics, as written up in the papers lying beside me. Thinking it might afford a little harmless amusement, I did not interfere when she took possession of *The Saturday Mail's* editorial page. But, gracious goodness! if the child is not attempting to swallow one of those editorials! Who would have dreamed of attempting such a feat? I make haste to remove from her such unwholesome and indigestible diet. She protests vigorously, but is soon comforted by the substitution of a rattle for the editorial, and when I twist Principal Grant's letter to Mr. Meredith into a fan, and shake it before her, her hilarity is at its height.

At this point Boy No. 3 puts in an appearance. He is generally known in the establishment as the war correspondent, as it is he invariably reports from the seat of war. He comes to tell of a discussion that has arisen between the Sojer Boy and the Wise Man. Never did nature perpetrate a greater joke than when she gave an angel's face to the most mischievous of urchins, as is the war correspondent. I pay no attention to his description, graphic though it is, of the disturbance, so he soon goes off.

The fair, round head of wee Beat-

rice sinks lower and lower on my arm, as drowsiness comes over her. The blue eyes that opened upon this earth only six months ago are not open long at a time. I put down the copy of Browning I have been reading, and begin to sing a lullaby. My stock of nursery songs is scanty, but by repetition and variation of "Rock-a-by, Baby, On the Tree Top," and "Sleep, Baby, Sleep," I make them hold out until their purpose is accomplished, and the child falls into that tranquil, perfect sleep of infancy. Ah, little one, how many a world-weary man and woman would envy you one hour of such repose!

I lean back against the tree, and let the beauty of the scene take yet fuller possession of me. Some detached lines from one of the Pippa Passes song: are running through my head:

"The year's at the spring!
The hillside's dew pearled!
The lark's on the wing!
God's in His Heaven!
All's right with the world!"

What a cherry optimism breathes in some of Browning's lines! I think I never realized before how absolutely perfect nature is. Yesterday I was ready to sink beneath my load of petty care and worry, and life itself seemed a doubtful blessing. Now I feel it a joy merely to be alive in the midst of this brightness. Only a feeling of sadness comes over me when I think how out of harmony we are with it all. The feeling is intensified when I look down upon the sleeping child. One little finger is between the rosy, parted lips; upon the face all is yet fair and untouched by the defiling hand of time. Who is there—what women, at least, is there—who can hold a child in her arms without feeling the stirrings of the nobler nature, however quiescent at other times it may be within her? The worldliness, the frivolity, the utter vanity, of so much of my life presents itself to me appallingly. Afar off the childish laughter and shouting sound