

THE STORY OF A BLACK BEETLE.

A friend of mine had a kitchen and cellar underground which were infested with these troublesome insects. You might have thought that all the beetles in the parish held council there, so numerous were they. Of course he wished very much to get rid of them, but this was no easy matter. However many, Hetty, the housemaid, might capture one night, there were sure to be quite as many there the next. Poison was tried; but no, the creatures were far too wide awake to eat that; they were not going to be taken in that way; not they, indeed.

My friend, however, being a man of science, was not easily discouraged; and, at length, he devised a plan which seemed likely to succeed. Late one night he went into the kitchen, and scattered on the floor a chemical powder the scent of which he believed would stupefy the insects as they crept along with their noses on the floor, and leave them half dead and senseless, so that they could easily be destroyed.

And, sure enough, the next morning there were a great many victims lying just ready for Hetty to sweep up.

That night the experiment was tried again; but what was my friend's astonishment and dismay, to discover, the next morning, that his little scheme had been detected. One large beetle, indeed, was walking cautiously along, right through the powder; but how should you think he was walking?—actually on his two hind legs, with his head lifted as far as possible from the floor, so that the powder had not the desired effect.

How my friend afterwards managed to get rid of his troublesome tenants I need not say, but I can tell you that it was of no use after the first night, to put down the powder, not a bit.

Now, do you think that was a very wise black beetle? Without at all commending or admiring his character as a whole, I

think we must all admit that in this one thing he acted prudently, and in a manner worthy of our imitation. Strange teacher as a black beetle may seem to be, I really think we might learn a lesson from the conduct of this one; even as great King Solomon learnt a lesson from the tiny ant.

My little readers will find, as they pass through life, many a snare laid to entrap them. The world, evil companions, Satan, and their own deceitful hearts, will all form devices for their ruin, and the only way to escape sin is to walk through this world of sin, where evil everywhere abounds, with great watchfulness, and with heart and eyes raised above.

Let the ruin of others warn you against the power and deadening influences of evil. The very nature of sin is to stupefy your conscience, and to injure your sense of right and wrong. Carefully guard, then, against the first approach of temptation; keep as far away from it as possible; do not for a moment tamper with it; let no evil habit, no evil thought, no vain desires, gain the mastery over you.

My steps, I know, are on the plains of danger,

For sin is near;

But, looking up, I pass along, a stranger,
In haste and fear.

Above all, dear children, cultivate this habit of looking up. Yes, look up in prayer and faith, to the Heavenly Father who so tenderly loves you and cares for you, and who will aid your very feeblest effort to please and serve Him. Without Him you will certainly fail, for the strongest of us is weak and helpless, and the best of us is sinful in His holy sight; therefore, day by day, and every day, let us ask Him to direct our steps, and to keep us from every evil way.

Beset with snares on every hand,
In life's uncertain path I stand;
Saviour Divine, send forth Thy light,
To guide our doubting footsteps right.