

The Prairie Fire.

BY G. W. HALL.

Over the undulate prairie
I rode as the day was done;
The west was aglow—but to northward
A glare like the rising sun,
Seen through the eddying sea-mists,
Broke on the darkening night,
And a cloud of smoky blackness
Shut out the stars' dim light.

I felt the sweep of the norther,
But a deeper, deadlier chill
Struck to my heart for an instant
With its passage of death and ill:
Then I drew the chinchas tighter
And looked to stirrup and rein,
As the northern glare grew brighter,
And the gusts gained strength again.

Then, as we hurried southward;
Brighter, nearer and higher,
Like lambent serpents heavenward
Writhed up each flaming spire;
Leaping across the benches,
Where the grass was thin and dry,
Rolling in fiery surges,
Where the reeds stood rank and high.

A drifting whirl of cinders,
A chorus of blinding smoke,
A roaring sea of fire—
Across the plains it broke!
From the pools the wild fowl darted
To circle the lurid sky;
From his lair the scared deer started,
And swept like a phantom by.

On, towards the distant river,
Wasted by weeks of drouth,
Like a shaft from the sun god's quiver,
We sped towards the murky south.
To halt was death; and far distant
Lay life and safety and rest;
The air grew hot and each instant
The foam fell on counter and breast.

Nearer each moment the fire swept,
Thicker the red sparks fell;
Higher the roaring flames leapt
With the blast of that fiery hell.
I felt that we soon must stifle
In the midst of the narrow trail.

But bravely my trusty courser
Kept on in his headlong flight—
Though his laboured breath grew hoarser—
Till the river gleamed in sight.
A plunge through the thickest border
Of withered grass and reed,
And the waters of the river!
Laved the heaving flanks of my steed.

Up to the brink of the river
Swept the waves of that fiery sea,
With pulses and limbs a-quiver
I could neither stand nor flee!
I saw the flames tower heavenward
With dim eyes and failing breath;
Then all around was darkness—
A faintness and gloom like death!

When I woke the flames were racing
Far westward o'er bluff and hill;
My faithful steed was grazing
On the banks of our guardian rill;
And I offered thanks to heaven,
Where the stars shone clear and bright,
For the safety and mercy given
To us on that fearful night.

The congregations of the next generation are now in the Sabbath-schools, and it is most important that the closest vital connection shall be maintained between school and church.

To be always intending to lead a new life, but never find time to set about it. This is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping from one day and night to another, till he is starved and destroyed.

Tattling.

JOHN SANDERS was in trouble. Sarah Barker had told Harry Somers that John was the meanest fellow she ever saw, and Harry Somers had told Frank Tower; and Frank Tower, as a devoted friend, had come and told John. And John wasn't going to stand that, he said, from any girl. So he rudely accosted Sarah on her way to school, telling her "she wasn't much of a lady, with all of her mincing ways," feeling rather ashamed of his angry impertinence before he finished the sentence.

Sarah looked surprised, and not a little angry; but the flushed cheek and expression of pain in the honest eyes didn't strike John as belonging to a mean-spirited girl.

What had she done that John should treat her so? She met Frank Tower, and told him her grievance. Frank said, "he knew all about it. John knew what she had said about him."

"What have I said?"

"That John was an awfully mean, contemptible fellow."

"O, Frank, I never said that," cried Sarah, with honest warmth.

"But Harry Somers told me you did," said Frank.

"And you told John? Well, it wasn't true; and if it were, I don't think it very kind in you to run to him and tell him my opinion at second-hand, for you know how words always get changed in repeating them."

"Well, what did you say, then?"

"I told Harry I thought it was mean for him to tease that little French boy as he did; and I think so still, and have meant to tell him so myself, when I saw a good chance to do so."

Frank looked rather crestfallen, and began to realize he had done rather a small thing in carrying to John this foolish cause for quarrel. When Sarah told John frankly what she had said, he felt rather more ashamed, and quite transferred his anger where he had half unconsciously felt it belonged, if it belonged anywhere. John was, by nature, a hector, seeing a joke oftener where another would see only pain and annoyance; but he had a blunt sense of honour, and was never found in the tattling business. The meanness of that he could see, and it was the agency of those tell-tale boys rather than Sarah's honest opinion that vexed him now.

"I hate a tattler," he said to the boys with emphasis, as they stood together after school; "and I think you might find some better employment."

"I only told Frank what Sarah said," cried Harry, "and didn't suppose he'd run to you with it."

"And I only told you because I thought you ought to know it," said Frank.

"And what good did it do?" said John. "Only made me mad and rude to Sarah, and angry with you afterwards."

"Well, you needn't have hectored Louis so, then," said Frank, who had vigorously applauded John's funny jokes upon the French boy at the time.

"Now," said John, "I'd like to have you look me straight in the eye, Frank Tower, and tell me if it was your love of fair play or regard for Louis, that led you to repeat, with alterations, what Sarah Barker said? And you, Harry Somers, was it because you really wished to cure me of meanness that you came and told it to me, so much worse, too, than she said it? I don't believe in this tell-tale business, boys, as a reform measure, and don't you try it on me any more. I won't carry any ugly messages, and don't you bring any to me."

The boys felt a little abashed at John's rebuff,

but had enough of the unspoiled boy nature in them to accept it amiably. John never snubbed Sarah again, and the boys are all excellent friends, Louis included. Total abstinence from tale-bearing, of course, promoted harmony, while all honest rebukes of cruel excesses in the hectoring line were taken kindly and had due effect. Having seen that tattling was worse than hectoring, they began to see how mean and cruel hectoring might become, when the love of joke and banter became so great that they were willing to sacrifice the feelings and comfort of the humblest to its exercise.

John felt a little honest satisfaction the other day when he heard the teacher tell a visitor that tattling seemed to have been unaccountably banished from the exercises in his school, as it had formerly brought much discord. Not that John flattered himself that he alone had banished it; but he knew he had taken a good stand in that little crisis of the "Barker, Tower, Somers, Sanders scandal," and helped a little toward the good reputation in which they all rejoiced, and which they had fairly earned.

A Pretty World.

I ONCE strolled through a miserable Mexican village. The shadows were creeping over the cabins, where women came and went in silence, and men sat smoking at the cabin doors, while children played in swarms by the water.

A black, bent, old negro woman, all patches from head to foot, frosty-headed and half-blind, came crooning forth with a broken crock tied together, in which she had planted a flower to grow by her door. I stopped, watching her set it down and arrange it; and then, not wishing to stare rudely at this bent old creature, I said:—

"Good evening, auntie; 'tis a pretty evening."

She slowly straightened up, looked at me, looked away at the fading sunlight on the hills, and said softly:

"Oh, it's a pretty world, massa!"

That old woman was a poetess—a prophetess. She had a soul to see the beauty—the poetry—about her. "Oh, it's a pretty world, massa!" She had no other form of expression; but that was enough. Hers was the password to Nature.

"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good."—*Selected.*

What Made the Baby Cross.

"MAMMA, I wish you'd call the baby in. He's so cross we can't play," cried Robert to his mamma one day, as he was playing in the yard with his sister and the baby.

"I don't think he would be cross if you were not cross to him," said mamma, coming out. "He does just as he sees you do. Just try him, and see. Put your hat on one side of your head."

Robbie did so, and presently the baby pushed his straw hat over on one side of his head.

"Whistle," said mamma.

Robbie did, and baby began to whistle, too.

"Stop mocking me!" said Robbie, angrily, giving baby a push. Baby screamed, and pushed Robbie back.

"There, you see," said his mother, "the baby does just as you do. Kiss him now, and you will see how quickly he will follow your example."

Robbie did not feel exactly like doing this, but he did; and the baby hugged and kissed him back very warmly.

"Now, you see," said his mother, "you can have a cross baby or a good baby of your little brother, just which you choose. But you must teach him yourself."—*Selected.*