

THE LITTLE FOLK.

THE MIDNIGHT MEDITATIONS OF A MOUSE.

BY E. R. NOBLE.

Oh dear! I know I'll get caught in that horrid trap some one of these fine nights. But what is a poor mouse to do when he has to support a large and interesting family by his own efforts, especially when they are always hungry? These great big creatures called men think they work hard when they spend ten hours out of the twenty four in trying to support their families—I wonder how they would like to watch every moment of the day, and night too, to seize their opportunity of making a living, as we have to do. Now, I am only one mouse out of many, but as I am one of the most influential citizens of Mouserie (the capital of Mouseland), you may be interested in learning how we do things down there.

We are a thrifty set, I can tell you, and turn every crumb to advantage. I am in the grocery business myself, and supply large numbers of more wealthy mice who have retired from active business. I bring in all the goods, which we call "laying in stock," while my children manage the store and wait on customers.

Of course I have to get out nearly every day to see after my supplies, and as I am not a very welcome visitor in most houses, and have many dangers to guard against, great care is necessary. I lie near the mouth of my private entrance to the house (the people speak of it as a "hole") until I am sure the room is empty, and that there are no immediate dangers awaiting; then out I creep, and look about for the scraps careless human beings are sure to leave about. They little realize that they support another family as well as their own. I don't wonder they complain about "hard times," but I must say, if mortals were as ready to seize opportunities as mice, there would be more rich men in the world, I am sure. Did you ever see a thin mouse, I ask you? There is hardly a poor mouse in Mouseland, and it is all because they keep their eyes open. "Busy as a bee," indeed! Bees are lazy compared to us. You'll be surprised to know that it is not only from larders, kitchens, and dining rooms that I carry my stores. No, indeed, in these days people seem to eat all over the house, and it is from the parlors and bedrooms that I usually pick my choicest articles. Houses with children in them are my delight, for from those I never come away empty clawed. The careless little things drop cookies and candies about like toys, and always forget to put the top on the sugar bowl. We mice, you know, are splendid climbers, and many's the good piece of apple or cake I've stolen from the top of a sideboard when it was thought to be safe. And sometimes when a thing is too big for me to move, I run home and call my family. Then we all come back, and eat as much as we can, and this is what we call "dining out."

You have no idea what risks we run in the pursuit of business. The pirates that I hear about never had such dangerous times. In the first place, there are those frightful cats and dogs. Oh, I do so hate a cat! They are such sly things, always pretending to be asleep until you get well to work, and then pouncing on you when you least expect it. I tell you, you have to be pretty wide awake to escape from them. Dogs I don't mind so much; that is, the big ones, for they are clumsy, and we can nearly always get out of the way, besides teasing them by nibbling behind them just where they can't see us; that is great fun, for they do get so angry. But the little dogs are dreadful—quite as bad as cats (though not so sly); while there is one kind of dog they call a ferret—ugh! I cannot talk about 'n, it makes my fur go the wrong way, but I'll whisper you what we call him—its "Sure Death." Really, the very thought of the dreadful thing makes my teeth chatter. Then another way they have of catching us is to spread a nice piece of bread and butter with something else, and put it in an easy place for us. What the something else is I am not quite sure, but we have learnt from sad experience that it doubles us up with pain, and now we very seldom touch bread any more. As if there were not enough ways for catching us poor little toadies. There are the traps, and I almost believe those are the worst of all, for they are set about dark rooms at night, most temptingly baited, and unless you are an old mouse you are apt to put your head in danger before you think. Old hands like myself, sometimes, when times are bad, deliberately try to steal the bait off the hook. It is very dangerous business, and though a clever mouse often succeeds, he sooner or later becomes careless and loses his head. I am sure it will be the end of me, for my grandfather, and his father before him, wound up that way, but risks must sometimes be taken when one's stock of cheese is low. In this very house they have put a trap right by a trash basket of which I am very fond, for there I have found time and again the choicest delicacies in my store, and I am going at once to steal off that bait. I wonder that men can complain of hardship when they think of us. Perhaps they haven't known,

before, all we have to go through with; if so, I hope this little talk of mine may open their eyes and show them that in this world, where every one strives, we little mice have as big a part to play in proportion to our size as they have.—The Outlook.

WHY NOT ASK A BLESSING.

BY LEANDER S. KEYSER.

There were six in that gay little party—six bright girls. Of the books they read, the albums and pictures they looked at, and the rollicking games they played, I shall not tell you, because you know more about such things at a girls party than I do.

All the girls were visitors, except Gertie Dinmore, who couldn't be a visitor, because the party was at her house. A charming hostess she made, too, as all her guests declared, for she thought more of their pleasure than of her own.

It was a pleasant summer day. The sun shone from a sky that was as deep blue as the trees and lawns were deep green; and the chippies and wrens trilled gayly about the house.

When noon came, the dinner was set on a table out under a thick shade tree in the yard. Oh! there were—but what do I know about a girls' picnic dinner? All I can say is, that the white cloth and the table itself fairly groaned aloud under the weight of the things.

"Well, sit up, sit up," said the little hostess, pleasantly, when all things were ready.

The party having been seated, there was a pause, and everybody glanced around at everybody else. Some of the girls looked a little embarrassed as if they didn't quite know what was the proper thing to do next.

"Why don't they begin so eat?" whispered Sadie Carson to Allie Wright.

But before Allie could answer, Gertie Dinmore, the hostess, cleared her throat and said:

"My papa and mamma and I always ask a blessing at the table."

"That's what we do at our house," said Ruth Billingsly.

"So do we," chimed Allie Wright and her little sister Jane. "And I never feel right to sit down and eat a meal unless someone does return thanks for the nice food," added Allie. "I think it terribly ungrateful not to thank God for his goodness."

"Well, let us just say thanks all around, then, before we begin to eat," suggested Gertie. "I'll take the lead."

The girls bowed their heads, while one after another said a brief simple prayer. But when it came to Sadie Carson's turn, she blushed, hesitated, and then stammered out, almost in tears:

"My papa never asks a blessing, and I don't know how."

This caused a little confusion, but the next girl set all right again by repeating the prayer she had learned at home, and then, as she was the last, the girls all lifted their heads, and the meal began.

"I sink it real mean not to say 'Sank you' to God when he's so good," blurted out Jane Wright, who was the youngest girl in the party.

"Why?" asked Sadie Carson, blushing.

"Why, 'cause," replied little Jane. "When your papa or mamma, or somebody else, gives you somethin' real nice, don't you sank em for it? 'Twouldn't be good—good manners not to, would it? Well, it's not good manners to God to take every nice thing he gives us, an' not say 'Sank you!'"

"Jane's right," added the young hostess, handing around the fruit. "Nothing's worse than being ungrateful. Just think of sitting down three times every day in the year, and eating up God's nice gifts, an' then never once thanking Him for them all!"

"It's real mean, so it is," admitted Sadie Carson; "just as little Jane says; and I will ask my papa to ask a blessing, too."

Sadie was a resolute little girl, and so, when she sat down at the table that evening in her own home, she said in her blunt way:

"Papa, all the girls at the party to-day said that their papas asked a blessing at the table. I was the only one who couldn't say my papa did. Oh, how sorry I was! And what'd you think? All the girls themselves said thanks at our party—all but me, and I couldn't, 'cause I hadn't learned any prayer at home!" Sadie's voice almost broke. "Why don't you ever ask a blessing, papa?"

It was an embarrassing question. Mr. Carson's face grew as red as the cherries on the table before him. He was so surprised and ashamed that he couldn't answer a word, but could only look down at his plate and pretend he hadn't heard.

But he heard. Nor could he forget his little daughter's question. It was a severe struggle, but after a few days he conquered himself, and said one morning at the breakfast table:

"Let us ask a blessing!"

And after that day he never omitted that important part of the meal.