

## THE CHILD KING.

"Will you go over to Nankin with me, to-morrow?" asked kindly Mrs. Brown of her tired and hard-working neighbor, Mrs. Peters. "You know association meets there, and husband's got to go, so I thought you would like to drive over and see your Aunt Betsey."

"Oh, I should, ever so much! but Dell has got to go to a picnic, to-morrow afternoon, and it'll take me the whole of the morning to iron her white dress. I've just got it washed and hung out; and then there's biscuit to make; she wants 'em fresh. And!"

"O mother!"

The words came before the door flew open, and in bounded a young girl of 12, with the assurance and polish of 40, dressed in a braided costume that implied a week's hard work for somebody, her light hair tangled on her low forehead, cheap rings and bracelets shining on her fingers and arms, a gulf necklace round her swallow throat, over a full of imitation lace, her whole air pert, tawdry and disagreeable. She barely nodded to the minister's wife, and went on in a loud voice. "Say! Lucille says I'd ought to have some little pies and some cream cake besides the biscuit, so I run home to tell you."

Poor Mrs. Peter's face fell.

"I don't really see how I can, Dell. It's quite a piece of work to make them cream cakes. I can make some pie crust and fix it up for the pies."

"Oh, but I want the cream cakes! If you make 'em to-night, the pies can wait till morning."

"But, Dell, I've got to get the bread fast and wash the dishes and make the beds and sweep, and then iron your white dress, and you know there's sights of work on it, and you want them refuted, and!"

"Oh, can't you get up real early?"

Mrs. Brown was indignant. A wise proverb cautions us not to put a finger between the bark and the tree, but she did not remember it. "Why don't you make the cake yourself, Della?" she said. "When I was your age I could make cake. Can't you?"

Della started at her scornfully; Mrs. Peters put in her word at once.

"Oh, I haven't never asked it of her. Mrs. Brown. Della's real delicate, and she loves to go; children can't children but once, and I want for her to have a good time. I'll fetch it round somehow, Dell, dear. You tell Aunt Betsey, won't you, Mrs. Brown, how that I wanted to see her, but I really couldn't get over. I thank you just as much."

Mrs. Brown offered no further remarks. There was a tone of aggrieved motherhood in Mrs. Peters's voice that warned her to keep silence; she said good-bye, and pursuing her walk up the street, rung the bell at a handsome house standing in a well-kept yard, that told its own story of wealth within. She was admitted to the parlor and warmly welcomed by Mrs. and Miss Vincent, a wife of middle age and her sister-in-law.

But hardly had she begun to talk with her friends when the door opened, and in rushed four children of various ages, who after nodding at the visitor, or reluctantly shaking hands, at once monopolized the conversation. In vain did Mrs. and Miss Vincent struggle to be heard.

"Oh Mary! I was trying to tell Mrs. Brown!"

"Well, ma, I've got to go; I said I would, and!"

"Oh, yes! You told Will Johns you'd go, and you've got to! Just like a girl!"

"Milly, dear, I want to ask Mrs. Brown!"

"Well, aunt Sue, I must go if Mary goes, and there's that picnic, and!"

So it went on, a perfect Babel, which no present effort could silence, it had been so long the habit in this house for the elders to listen and the children to speak.

Mrs. Brown made only a short call;

she went but a few steps further to the house of a desolate woman, a widow, who had lost her two children a month since with diphtheria. Mrs. Tenny burst into tears as she came into the room, and Mrs. Brown patted arms about her tenderly.

"My poor friend!" was all she could say.

"O Mrs. Brown, I can't, I can't be reconciled to it. I miss them every second. Hal used to come in so bright from school—his first year to go, you know; and Susy was always at my knee or in my lap, when she was awake; and in the lonesome nights I used to listen for their soft breathing, and put out my hand to feel Susy's little tender face in the crib, and thank God I had them still, if their father had left me."

There was nothing to say to this; as of old, the mother wept for her children and refused to be comforted. Mrs. Brown tried another course.

"They were not both taken at once?" she asked.

And the mother ceased for the moment to answer her, and with the pathetic garrulosity of grief entered into detail.

"No, Hal came home from school, one day, so tired, and said his head ached."

And I tried to make him keep still on the sofa, but he was restless, and he would go out in the sunshine to see the chickens; it was a hot day in May, and I couldn't make him keep a hat on; pretty soon he sort of crawled back into the kitchen and said his 'foat' was sore, and 'fings kep' goin' round an' round.' Then I sent for Dr. Smith, and he gave me some medicine and a brush and told me to put it on the inside of his throat, and rub some liniment on the outside. But Hal wouldn't let me, and he screamed and kicked so he choked up right away I couldn't do it, it hurt him so, and he wouldn't let me if I'd wanted to."

"I meant to send Susy away, but she never would stay with anybody but me, the little precious! I never could make her. So she sickened next day, and there couldn't be anything done for her; there wasn't a day between them. And now—now—my house is like a grave all the time."

In the piteous burst of sobbing that followed, could Mrs. Brown speak the thought that filled her heart and say "My friend, you have fallen into the pit that you have digged; if your children had learned to obey you in health, they might have been with you to-day?"

She could not, deeply as she felt it; the hour for counsel was past; she could only "weep with them that weep," and betake herself to the next call on her list, for Mrs. Brown was doing parish duty this afternoon.

Mrs. Tibbets was very glad to see her. "And how are you all to-day?" asked the minister's wife.

"Oh, we're reasonable well, all but Nelly; she got thrown down at the rink last night, and sprained her ankle real bad. I've expected all along something like that would happen to her."

"Don't you think it is a bad place for girls to go anyway?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"Land, yes! But all the young folks are possessed to go, and you can't stop 'em. I wish to goodness the men that built that rink had been further! There's all sorts go there, and they talk to everybody, and get familiar-like with folks you wouldn't have them know no more than nothing. There's about as much harm to a rink as there is to a rum hole, but it makes about as much money; so you can't stop 'em: nobody can't."

"Why do you let your girls go there?"

"Mercy! I can't help 'em goin'. Girls is as headstrong as pigs; the more you pull 'em one way, the more they go other way. I've always wanted my children to have a good time whilst they was young; there's trouble enough ahead of 'em, so I've let 'em run, and then't to be expected that I can up and stop 'em now."

There was no controverting that point, so Mrs. Brown said no more.

The next house was Mr. Meeker's. Mrs. Meeker sat at the window, watching with anxious eyes her oldest son, who was experimenting with a new bicycle.

"Oh, Mrs. Brown," she said, looking over her shoulder, "come in do; I can't go away a minute from the window, I'm afraid Charley'll fall and hurt him. He's been crazy after a bicycle, and Mr. Meeker didn't know how to get one for him—they're real costly—and I begged and begged him not to buy one, for I knew I shouldn't have a minute's peace while he was off with it; but the boy wanted it, and that's enough. What he wants he's got to have. We're behind with the taxes, and I'm fixing over my old clothes rather than ask John for a cent; but Charley's got his father's foot, as folks say, and I don't know why he shouldn't have. Boys must be boys, you know, and I never did believe in making images of 'em, to do just so, and be prim and proper all their days. Oh, o-h! I thought he was off that time, but he wasn't. I do believe my nerves will be worn to ravelin's with that bicycle. Don't go!"

"I won't stay now, Mrs. Meeker. I know you want to watch Charley. I'll come some other time."

So, quite unattended, Mrs. Brown found her way to the door, and went on to the next house, where Miss Sophronia Packard lived all alone and took in sewing. Mrs. Brown made the usual civilities, and then Miss Sophronia opened the conversation.

"I see you come from Mrs. Meeker's; well, I do pity that woman; she hasn't a minute's peace for them children; and here's Miss Bunnell, next door, is just as bad, though she hasn't got but one; but her May is headstrong, now, I tell you. Why, she goes all the time! If it isn't a dance, it's a picnic, or a ride, or a sail. She's as impudent as a bumble bee, and as bumptious as a wren, but she isn't of no use in this livin' world, as I see, but to plague her ma. Why, t'other day, Miss Bunnell found out that May was goin' over to Norwalk in a buggy, with a young feller at eight o'clock in the evenin', calculating to come home by moonlight, betwix one an' two in the mornin', and, naturally, she set down her foot that Mary shouldn't go. She didn't know the feller and she knew it wasn't seemly for a gal of fifteen to go off that way with any young man, and so she told May; but, if you'll believe it, Mrs. Brown, that piece just put on her sack and bunnet, and walked right out of the door, and off with her feller! If I'd been her ma, she'd have got a locked door in her face when she come home."

h, Miss Sophronia, do you think that would have helped the matter? A father's house ought never to be closed on a child, any more than our Father's, least of all when the child's faults are the result of the parents' folly and weakness."

"Well, maybe there's something in that! But it does seem to me that something had ought to be done, when a girl files right in her ma's face like that!"

"I'm afraid it is too late to do much at Mary's age but pray for her."

"Land! you don't suppose Miss Bunnell thinks May needs prayin' for? Why, she thinks she's about as nigh perfect as they make 'em; she's clean ast up with that child—all the one she ever had. If you should so much as hint about prayin' for her, I guess you'd raise a fuss right off!"

Mrs. Brown tried to control her temper, but found it hard. "Sophronia, of fine scorn was irresistible. She is an old sinner, by saying so."

"I am sorry, Mrs. Phelps has been away; I meant to call on her."

"Well, you can't say that. She ain't gone," said Miss Sophronia in a very acrid tone.

"Not gone! Why, she had wanted so much to see her sister, I thought nothing would hinder her!"

"I know it, she hasn't seen Miss King for three years, but Marian went and asked two girls, and the—"

of 'em, to come this week and stay till after the First, and Miss Phelps wasn't goin' to leave 'em there alone to raise hurdy; besides that, her hired girl ain't competent to do for company. But that's the fashion; the children rowl, now-a-days. I feel thankful to goodness every day that I wa'n't never beguiled into the married state, and I haven't got no youngsters a-walkin' over me, makin' a door mat of me! Not but what I might be like Miss Perkins, to be sure, if I'd had a nuphew, thanks be to praise I ha'n't! But I stepped in there t'other day, and if that woman wasn't a-goin' round the keepin'-room on all fours with her sister's boy astride of her back, and she a sayin' 'O do stop Sammy! I'm so tired! And he a whippin' of her up, and a screamin' 'Go 'long, hussy! go 'long hussy!' And she did go 'long, till I poked him up, with a jerk, and set him down hard on the highest chair. My! didn't the holler! and wa'n't she mad! But I'm glad I done it!"

That night Mrs. Brown detailed all that she had seen and heard in her round of calls, to her husband, as they sat together by the study fire. His face clouded darkly, but he did not tell her what heavy thoughts pierced the future, and saw, as in a vision, impending trouble for the land and the people that he loved. All that he did, when his reverie was ended, was to draw a deep sigh, and repeat, in melancholy tones, one text from the Scripture that was his counsel for both lives: "Woe to thee, oh land, when thy king is a child."

And let all the people say:

"Amen!"

## Blue Eyes.

Eyes express all the sentiments which the human heart is capable of feeling. They are independent. They look where they please, and when they please. They ask no favors, respect no position, and bow to no aristocracy.

First in the list come the "bonnie eyes of blue." In their depths we readily trace gentleness, purity, obedience and candor. They have a haunting fawn-like expression which is in itself a charm. O, bewildering blue eyes! Artists love them best of all, and poets pay them charming tributes.

Blue eyes, so meek and loving, yet so coy. They are the eyes for the fireside angel,—remember this, azure-eyed maidens. The blue-eyed, flaxen haired wife! The calm, loving, blue-eyed mother!

Where is the man so granite hearted as to gaze rapturously upon a little blue-eyed fairy, with hair of pale spun gold, and manners charmingly piquant? He does not exist! I can readily understand why a noble, high minded man, will risk life for such a radiant being, and will press onward, though his path be strewn with thorns of fire and blood. Eyes but glance, yes, but they will climb the temple of Fame unflinchingly. Blue eyes.

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