

A LETTER FROM HOME.

When far from our loved ones, the silent tears starting Bedim the rough pathway where friendless we roam, The balm that can soften the sorrow of parting May often be found in a letter from home. For who can have wandered, alone and a stranger, And not felt his being with ecstasy thrill, To know that through solitude, sadness, or danger, The thoughts of his kindred have followed him still? How treasured, how sweet, are the words of affection, When traced by the hand that was friendship's true gage; And how swift, as we read, to our fond recollection Comes back the dear face that bent over the page. Oh, yes, there are the ties that no distance can sever— They girdle the mountains, they span the wide foam, And love does but rivet them closer whenever It speaks to our heart in a letter from home.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

PARLOR STOVE'S VACATION.

Not since it could remember had the parlor stove taken a vacation. In November it was brought into the sitting room and placed on the square piece of zinc near the bedroom door, and there it stood until May. Its short fat legs grew tired—oh, so tired—standing always in the same place. Every morning and evening it poured big buckets of coal into its mouth, which, strangely enough, was at the top of its head. All day and night the stove had to chew on this hard black coal until its teeth, which were in a circular ring just above the grate, were as tired as its legs. When the stove did not chew fast enough papa took the poker and picked the clinkers out of its teeth, and then the stove would get very warm and its big eyes in the door would shine until they lighted the whole room, and even outshone the lamp behind the green shade on the table. But one night the stove determined to take a vacation. It was so tired of standing still, always in one place! When papa and mama had gone to bed and Ruth and Lois each in her own little white cot were fast asleep, and even the dollies beside them were so still that the stove thought they must be asleep, too, the time came. Looking carefully around to see that no one was in the sitting room, the stove laid aside its big pipe and stepped off the zinc—first one foot, then another. It seemed so good to walk about like people that the parlor stove's eyes gleamed brighter than ever. Going over to the doll carriage, it started to lift out the big wax doll, but the doll was frightened and cried just a little. The stove was afraid some one would wake up, so it went away. It looked at Ruth's little dishes and even lifted the cover to Lois' trunk, where were hidden all her dolls' dresses and hoods. Then it saw something bright and pretty under the little table and reached for it. "What a handsome picture book!" it exclaimed. The stove seated itself in the easy chair and by the light of its glaring eyes read the little stories and looked at the pictures for a long, long time. Suddenly there was a noise in the bedroom and there came a voice. It was Ruth's: "Mamma! I want a drink." The stove started from the chair and dropped the book. It hurried to its old place on the zinc, took the big black pipe again and tried to look as though nothing had happened. "See what's the matter in the sitting room," it heard mamma say. Then papa came out and said: "What makes it smell so? The stovepipe must be broken." He opened the windows, shook the stove and picked the clinkers out of its teeth, then went back to bed. The poor stove was very much alarmed—indeed, it fairly trembled the next day, when it heard the dolls talking together and knew that the big wax doll had told the others all about the vacation in the night. And although papa and mamma and their little daughters never knew what the stove had done, it never dared leave the zinc again, for in spite of its good time it was too badly frightened to wish to take any chances. So it stood still until it was carried out to the barn in the spring.

GEORGIE AND MAGGIE'S ADVENTURE.

"O Georgie, aunt says we must run as fast as we can for the doctor, for mother is so sick," said little Maggie Dalton to her big brother George, two years her elder, as she ran out of the house to meet him. George, who had just come up the path, having stayed behind on his way from school to play marbles, affrighted at the words, clasped his sister's hand and with a brave face, for his years, said, "All right, Mag, come on." Down the road and over the fields the feet of the little ones sped until they came to the cross roads, a half mile away. "It would be nearer to cross Squire Washburn's fields," said Maggie, "wouldn't it? It isn't more than half as far that way." "Yes," answered George, "but there is the Squire's great cross bull. See him now, coming over the hill, whisking his tail. I guess we'd better go round the road." "Yes, but that would be twice as far," said Maggie, "and mother's awful sick." And as she spoke her great blue eyes

looked up into those of her brother George.

"Come," she said, "I ain't afraid; let's hurry" and as she spoke she had half climbed the gap in the wall.

George Dalton was not to be outdone by his little sister. He loved, too, his mother, as well as did his sister, Maggie. But he had stopped to think what might happen when he saw the Squire's cross bull come over the hill.

"All right, Maggie," he cried, "here goes," and as he spoke, running at full speed to the wall, he cleared it at a jump, and now stood with his sister on the other side. But as he did so, the bull that had frisked about the hill, and then climbed down its base, turned and looked at them.

A tremor entered both their little hearts. But it was a long hour's walk around the road to Dr. Fulson's and mother at home, sick, was appealing to them to run quickly.

The fierce looking animal had stopped still a long way off and after looking at them, his head down, was now trying to lift upon his horns a great uprooted tree-stump, all the time bellowing fearfully.

"Let us go along," said Maggie, "we'll turn down to the left there by the fence, and behind the hill he'll not see us."

"Well, here goes," said George, and clasping hands the little ones sprang onward over the green grass.

But now, as they did so, the bull turned to the right and was sweeping down towards the high fence.

"I know what we'll do," said George, seeing Maggie's cheeks turn pale, "you turn and run to the other side of the hill and go round that way, and I'll keep the bull back."

"And you be killed! O no, George, I can't do that!" and the little girl fell sobbing on the breast of her brother, her bravery all gone.

"Don't cry, Maggie, but run to the left of the hill," cried the brave boy, as he took up a long stick and turning his cap wrong side out, its red lining on the outside, waved it on the end of the stick.

"Run, Maggie, run!" he cried, as the bull, now seeing the red, came plunging forward. "Run!" he cried, "and he'll follow me to the wall, and I'll jump over."

But alas! George had not counted on the speed of the enraged animal, and a little Maggie sped away to the left and around the hill the fierce beast was almost upon him. Throwing down his cap and pole for dear life the little fellow sped on toward the wall, but longer, heavier steps were behind. He turned his eyes as he ran. He looked back and his heart stopped. The animal was right upon him. He could not reach the wall. His heart sank. His limbs grew weak, he could hear the mad leaps behind, almost feel the breath of the oncoming desperate brute. He was about to sink when high and clear rang Maggie's voice:

"The tree, the tree! George! climb the apple tree!"

He was none too soon. And now beneath the low branches of the only tree in the field which in his onward rush and fright he had not seen, he looked up beneath it. The bull, too, had heard the voice of the girl calling, and turning for the instant, had slackened speed, and as it did, George Dalton had grasped the lowest great limb of the tree and was now swinging himself up into the branches. But none too quick. For hardly had he done so when, with a thundering roar, that almost shook the fields and frightened his little heart to stillness, came the angry horns of the bull with cruel force against the trunk of the tree from which the bark was torn by the force of the blow.

"Ah there, get back, get back!" called a strong, manly voice from the road, and George looking through the green branches saw Dr. Fulson, who had just alighted from his chaise, grasping up a great rail, and hurrying forward.

The infuriated but cowardly beast seeing this new help coming, now turned with a great roar and away up the hill went at a tearing speed. Two minutes later the doctor, who was on the road to visit another patient beyond Mrs. Dalton's, was on his way to see the children's mother, with the two little ones seated beside him.—Thomas Sherwood in "Orphans' Boquet."

SISTERS' LETTERS.

Some years ago as I sat on the piazza of a summer hotel, I noticed among the crowd a party of young people—two or three pretty girls and as many bright young men—all "waiting for the mail."

"Oh, dear," said the prettiest of the girls, impatiently, "why don't they hurry? Are you expecting a letter, Mr. Allison?"

And she turned to a tall youth standing near.

"I'll get one surely," he said. "It's my day. Just this peculiar letter always comes. Nell is awfully good; she's my sister, you know, and no fellow ever had a better one."

The pretty girl laughed, saying as he received his letter:

"Harry would think he was blessed if I wrote once a year."

Gradually the others drifted away; but Frank Allison kept his place, scanning eagerly the closely written sheets, now and again laughing quietly. Finally, he slipped the letter into his pocket, and, rising, saw me.

"Good morning, Miss Williams," he said, cordially, for he always had a pleasant word for us older people.

"Good news?" I questioned, smiling.

"My sister's letter always brings good news," he answered. "She writes such jolly letters."

And, unfolding this one, he read me scraps of it—bright, sparkling with here and there a little sentence full of sisterly love and tenderness. There was a steady light in his eyes, as, if apologizing for "boiling" me, he looked up and said, quietly:

"Miss Williams, if ever I make anything of a man it will be sister Nell's doing."

And as I looked at him I felt strongly what a mighty power "sister Nell" held in her hands—just a woman's hands like yours, dear girls, and perhaps no stronger or better; but it made me wonder how many girls stop to consider over those boys growing so fast toward manhood, unworthy or noble, as the sister may choose.

There is but one way, dear girls—begin at once while they are still boys of the

home circle, ready to come to "sister" with anything. Let them feel that you love them. These great, honest boy hearts are both tender and loyal, and if you stand by these lads now while they are neither boys nor men, while they are awkward and headless, they will remember it when they become the courteous, polished gentlemen you desire to see them. Do not snub them; nothing hurts a loving boy's soul more than a snub, and nothing more effectually closes the boy heart than thoughtless ridicule.—Le Couteux Leader.

AGRICULTURAL.

NOTES ON THE BLOSSOMING OF FRUIT TREES IN CANADA.

The cause of the unfruitfulness of orchards has always, at horticultural conventions and elsewhere, been prolific of much surmise, conjecture, and, I may say, variation of opinion. The possibility of the trouble existing, at least in part, in the blossom has been mooted on y in recent years. As a rule, I think we are prone to lay too much stress upon a single feature in the management of an orchard, and too little upon the collateral practices which make a harmonious and well-balanced programme in the life of the average apple orchard. Some orchardists pin their faith to varieties, others to location and cultivation, others again to manuring or pruning, and perhaps still others—to spraying. Undoubtedly, we cannot expect orchards in which trees are so closely planted as to be fighting for nourishment and for living room at twenty years of age to continue long and of healthy and fruitful condition. In passing, I may say that in certain localities, with certain varieties, close planting is desirable, and may be practised with profit, but this is the exception. Nor is it reasonable to expect trees to continue to yield profitable crops of apples year after year, when year after year we are taking away from the soil and putting nothing back. But granted that the trees are planted at the proper distance apart, that they are cultivated, pruned and manured reasonably and rationally, we do not, in most cases, reap entire success, unless the good treatment has been followed up by judicious and well-directed efforts having in view the destruction of injurious and noxious insects. There are instances on record where, even after all this labor and all these various precautions have been taken, the orchard still remains barren, and refuses to bear, defying all attempts to coax it into fruitfulness. One says, root prune to stop superabundant growth; another says, top prune to let in the light; another says, give manure to stimulate; another, seed down to check growth; and still another, spray to induce fruitfulness. All these counsels have been listened to, their advice acted upon, but still without success. We then begin to observe the conditions which surround orchards of a similar character. As a rule these observations lead to the conclusion that varieties intermingled are more fruitful than those in which varieties are separated and planted in large blocks. Prof. Beach, in his admirable address on this subject, before the association at Grifflia last year, cited a remarkable instance of this kind. The orchard was made up in part of Baldwins and of Greenings planted in blocks, and in part of Baldwins and Greenings mingled with other varieties. Where the two varieties mentioned were planted in blocks unmingled with other kinds they were unfruitful, but when mingled with other varieties the converse was true. This points at least to partial infertility of the blossom with its own pollen and points to the desirability of intermingling varieties in the orchard. In the case of certain varieties of American plums, this belief has prevailed for some time, and is no doubt well founded. The valuable investigations of Professors Beach and White upon grapes and pears clearly set forth a similar condition of affairs in the case of these fruits. Similar experiments with apples have been commenced at Ottawa, but need further confirmation before they can be announced with authority.—Prof. Saunders' Report, Ottawa.

ITALY DISHONORED.

The cringing demeanor of the Marquis Rudini and his cabinet has called forth the loudest cry heard yet from the Italian press. They one and all proclaim that Italy is being dishonored, and that anything but "war and reprisals" was repugnant to the feelings of the nation. Marquis Rudini, on the other hand, goes in for peace, and it would seem, a peace at any price, judging from his recent coquetting with England. Yet he would be a patriot, for he must needs show his patriotism and give substantial demonstration of its genuineness, or like Crispien lose his job. And so he formulates a patriotic message and bids his friends wait it out, the Mediterranean to the doomed army in Africa. The message is based on "hope" and "trust," with an addendum that the mistakes on the field of battle will be attentively investigated and severely punished should the parties charged be found guilty. And this is how the new Ministry thinks of retaining office and the confidence of the nation.

Agriculture for Manitoba. At this latter place also, I was enabled to examine a patch of the so-called RUSSIAN THISTLE (Salsola K. L. var. Tragus, DC.) This patch was on the banks of the Northern Pacific Railway. At the time of my visit, June 23, the young plants were very small, only an inch or two high, and great care was being taken to eradicate every plant. Gangs of men were specially employed all the summer by the railway company to attend to this work of destroying dangerous weeds. Upon inquiring, at the end of the season, how the clean state of the railway which I observed at the end of August had been maintained, Mr. J. E. Riley, the road-master, answered as follows through Mr. G. W. Vanderlice:— "In the matter of destroying noxious weeds during the past season, we have made it a point to go over all the right of way, at least once a week, and cut all that could be found, and, where there was Russian Thistle, often. We did not allow any of them to go to seed, and intend to follow this up until they are all exterminated. If the farmers would do the same, we should in a short time have none in the country.—Prof. Saunders' report, Ottawa.

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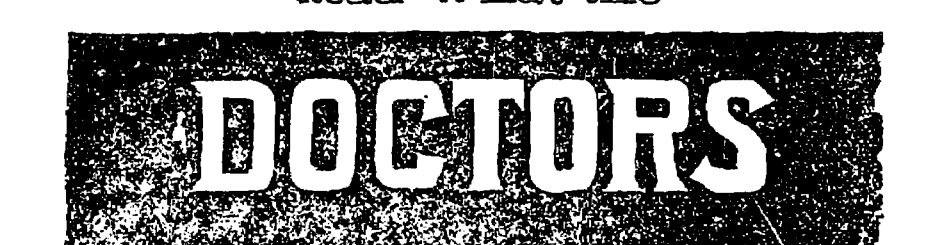
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