

that could so easily be mistaken for spring."

"Perhaps it is spring," said a very young pear tree that stood near.

"Oh, no, indeed!" answered the elder one: "and don't you know we must have snow and ice before spring comes again? But I suppose you are too young to remember."

"Maybe there won't be any snow or ice this winter," said the little tree.

"Never was there a winter without," replied the old one sharply.

"Couldn't there be?" said the other.

"No!" said the old one, snapping off a dry bough, and flinging it down to show that she was angry.

"Hateful old thing," whispered the young tree to its twin sister. "Wouldn't it be fun to blossom and have pears months before she did? Wouldn't she be mad? And how proud the gardener would be of us."

"Let's do it," said her sister. "These old trees are always trying to snub the young ones."

So in a few days the young pear trees were in bloom, and they held up their branches in pride before the older trees, saying: "Where's your winter? Where's your snow and ice? Soon we will have pears." But the old trees said nothing, only shook down a few withered leaves.

A week went by. Many friendly sparrows came to see and welcome the sweet, pale blossoms, and wonder at their coming so long before their time, and the sunshine kissed them lovingly and tenderly. But, ah me! at last one night came the frost, and the rude wind shouted: "Winter is here," and the next morning all the pretty flowers hung wilted on the boughs.

"What did I tell you!" said the old tree. "How soon do you expect to have pears now? And what's more, to punish you for your folly, I don't believe you'll have a single blossom when spring really comes."

"Hateful old thing!" said the young pear tree again; but in their hearts they bitterly regretted their sad mistake.

#### A Lesson of Trust.

A young man distressed about his soul, had confided his difficulties to a friend, who discerned very quickly that he was striving to obtain everlasting life by great efforts. He spoke of "sincere prayers" and "heartfelt desires" after salvation, but continually lamented that he did not "feel any different in spite of it all."

His friend did not answer him at first, but presently interrupted him with the inquiry, "W., did you ever learn to float?"

"Yes, I did," was the surprised reply.

"And did you find it easy to learn?"

"Not at first," he answered.

"What was the difficulty?" his friend pursued.

"Well, the first was, I could not lie still; I could not believe or realize that the water would hold me up without any effort of my own; so I always began to struggle, and of course, down I went at once."

"And then?"

"Then I found out that I must give up the struggle, and just rest on the strength of the water to bear me up. It was easy enough after that; I was able to lie back in the fullest confidence that I should never sink."

#### Have You a Mother

Have you a mother? If so, honour and love her. If she is aged, do all in your power to cheer her declining years. Her hair may have bleached, her eyes may have dimmed, her brow may contain deep and unsightly furrows, her cheeks may be sunken; but you should never forget the holy love and tender care she has had for you.

In years gone by she has kissed away from your cheek the troubled tears; she has soothed and petted you when all else appeared against you; she has watched over and nursed you with a tender care known only to a mother; she has sympathized with you in adversity; she has been proud of your success. You may be despised by all around you, but that loving mother stands as an apologist for all your short-comings.

With all that disinterested affection, would it not be ungrateful in you if in her declining years you fail to reciprocate her love and honor her as your best friend? We have no respect for a man or woman who neglects an aged mother. If you have a mother, love her, and do all in your power to make her happy.

#### The Dykes of Holland.

A certain zealous dame is said to have once attempted to sweep the ocean away with a broom. The Dutch have been wiser than this. They are slow and deliberate people. Desperation may use brooms, but deliberation prefers clay and solid masonry. So, slowly and deliberately, the dykes, those great hill-like walls of cement and stone, have risen to breast the buffeting waves. And the funny part of it is they are so skilfully slanted and paved on the outside with flat stones that the efforts of the thumping waves to beat them down only make them all the firmer!

These Holland dykes are among the wonders of the world. I cannot say for how many miles they stretch along the coast, and throughout the interior; but you may be sure that wherever a dyke is necessary to keep back the encroaching waters there it is. Otherwise nothing would be there—at least nothing in the form of land; nothing but a fearful illustration of the principal law of hydrostatics: Water always seeks its level.

Sometimes the dykes, however carefully built, will "spring a leak," and if not attended to at once terrible results are sure to follow. In threatened places guards are stationed at intervals and a steady watch is kept up night and day. At the first signal of danger every Dutchman within hearing of the startling bell is ready to rush to the rescue. When the weak spot is discovered what do you think is used to meet the emergency? What but straw—by everybody else considered the most helpless of all things in water! Yet straw in the hands of the Dutch has a will of its own. Woven into huge mats and securely pressed against the embankment it defies even a rushing tide, eager to sweep over the country. The dykes form almost the only perfectly dry land to be seen from the ocean side. They are high and wide, with fine carriage roads on top, sometimes lined with buildings and trees. Lying on one side of them and nearly on a level with the edge is the sea, lake, canal, or river, as the case may be; on the other the flat fields stretching dapply along at their base, so that cottage roofs sometimes are lower than

the shining line of water. Frogs squatting on the shore can take quite a birdseye view of the landscape; and little fish wriggle their tails higher than the tops of the willows near by. Horses look complacently down upon the bell-towers; and men in skiffs and canal boats sometimes know when they are passing their friend Dirk's cottage only by seeing the smoke from its chimney; or perhaps by the cart-wheel that he has perched upon the peak of its overhanging thatched roof in the hope that some stork will build her nest there and so bring good luck.—*St. Nicholas.*

#### Coming Back to God.

"I wish," said little Herbert.  
With naughty, pouting air.  
"That all us little children  
Need never say our prayers."

"It's such a lot of bother,  
This night and morning prayer  
God knows what we would ask for—  
I shouldn't think He'd care."

"Well, son," said mother, gravelly.  
"You need not kneel to-night;  
I do not think God listens  
Unless we pray aright."

So evening after evening  
The baby knelt alone,  
To join her hissing praises  
With praises round the throne.

And Herbert still kept silent:  
His mother's heart was sore,  
But yet she would not force him  
To worship and adore.

One night he came with sobbing  
And begged his prayer to say:  
"O, mother, it is dreadful,  
He cried, "to never pray!"

"I've felt so awful lonesome,  
For God seemed far away;  
I've found out now how near us  
It brings Him when we pray."

"And even you and father  
Seemed shut away from me;  
I only have come back to you  
Here kneeling at your knee."

"The very field and meadows  
Seemed driving me away;  
The birds all mocked me, crying,  
"The boy who will not pray."

"And always I kept thinking  
About the naughty lad  
Who went to a far country  
And was so very bad;

"When he was shamed and sorry,  
He went right back; and so  
I softly said what he said:  
"I will arise and go."

#### Tom's Gold Dust.

"That boy knows how to take care of his gold dust," said Tom's uncle often to himself and sometimes aloud. Tom went to college, and every account they heard of him he was going ahead, laying a solid foundation for the future.

"Certainly," said his uncle, "certainly; that boy, I tell you, knows how to take care of his gold dust."

"Gold dust!" Where did Tom get gold dust? He was a poor boy. He had not been to California. He never was a miner. When did he get the gold dust? Ah! he has seconds and minutes, and these are the gold dust of time—specks and particles of time which boys, girls and grown-up people are apt to waste and throw away. Tom knew their value. His father taught him that every speck and particle of time was worth its weight in gold; and his son took care of them as if they were. Take care of your gold dust!

#### A Little Errand for God.

Helen stood on the doorstep with a very tiny basket in her hand, when her father drove up and said: "I am glad you are all ready to go out, dear; I came to take you to Mrs. Lee's park to see the new deer."

"Oh thank you, papa; but I can't go just this time. The deer will keep and we can go to-morrow. I have a very particular errand to do now," said the little girl.

"What is it, dear?" asked the father.

"Oh, it is to carry this somewhere," and she held up the small basket.

Her father smiled and said: "Who is the errand for, dear?"

"For my own self, papa, but—oh, no; I guess not—it's a little errand for God, papa."

"Well I, will not hinder you, my little dear," said the good father, tenderly. "Can't I help you any?"

"No, sir, I was going to carry my big orange that I saved from the desert to old Peter."

"Is old Pete sick?"

"No, I hope not, but he never has anything nice, and he's good and thankful. Big folks give him only cold meat and broken bread; and I thought an orange would look so beautiful and make him so happy! Don't you think poor well folks ought to be comforted sometimes, as well as poor sick folks, papa?"

"Yes, my dear, and I think we too often forget them until sickness or starvation comes. You are right; this is a little errand for God. Get into the buggy and I will drive you to old Peter's and wait till you have done the errand, and then show you the deer. Have you a pin, Helen?"

"Yes, papa, here is one."

"Well, here is a five dollar bill for you to fix on the skin of the orange. This will pay old Peter's rent for four weeks, and perhaps this will be a little errand for God, too," said the gentleman.

Little Helen, who had taught a wise man a wise lesson, looked very happy as her fingers fixed the fresh bill on the orange.

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