

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

THE SUNBEAM.

By Frederick Irving Anderson.

It was a long, sleepy afternoon, and Catherine grew tired of play and went to the cool summer house where she could close the blinds and shut out the light. After a long time the sun came around the corner and peeped in through the keyhole. Catherine thought how fine it would be if she could catch him and keep him.

"It would never be dark, then," thought Catherine, and springing quietly from her couch, she slipped her finger over the keyhole just as if she were trying to catch a butterfly.

"Let me out," cried Sunbeam.
"What a funny little voice!" thought Catherine. She pinched herself to see if she were dreaming, and the funny thing about it was that she could not tell.

"I will come and see you to-morrow at this time if you will only let me go now," pleaded Sunbeam. "I must go around the world between now and then. If I should happen to be late all the clocks in the world would have to be turned back, and that is bad for clocks."

"Oh, don't be foolish. What have you got to do with clocks?" asked Catherine.

"Every day at noon men catch me in a funny thing they call a sextant, and when I move into just the right place they say, 'There she dips.' Then they know it is exactly noon, and they let me go."

"Don't be silly," cried Catherine. "Our clock in the dining room strikes twelve every day at noon. I have counted it, so I guess I know how to tell when it is noon. Besides, some days when it rains you aren't around at all, and we have noon just the same."

"Please, please let me go," pleaded Sunbeam. "If I am late the tide won't come in on time, and then the Lusitania can't come up the bay, 'cause the water won't be deep enough."

"Ho, ho! but you think you are smart," laughed Catherine.

"Well, you see it is this way," said Sunbeam. "The Moon follows me around every day, just like your dog Fido follows you, and the Moon makes the water in the ocean follow it."

"I have heard about the Moon," said Catherine.

"And people will think it is winter if I am late," said Sunbeam.

Catherine laughed at this.

"You will be sorry if it snows to-morrow," said Sunbeam.

"Oh, you are so silly," gasped Catherine. "Who ever heard of it snowing in August? But wouldn't it be fun?"

"I am not joking," said Sunbeam.

"Even a little girl like you ought to know that I come around later on winter mornings than on summer mornings. Everything will be topsy-turvy if you don't let me go."

Sunbeam sat on the floor for a little while thinking.

"Oh, let me look through that glass spangle," cried he at last. Catherine held up a three-sided piece of glass for Sunbeam to shine through, and she was never so surprised in her life as when she saw him spring from the floor and spread out in all sorts of colors on the wall.

"What are you doing?" cried Catherine, keeping her finger tightly over the keyhole so he could not get away.

"I am showing you my dress," said Sunbeam. "Isn't it very pretty?"

"Yes, it is very pretty," Catherine admitted, and it was. It was made up in bands of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. Catherine would have clapped her hands, only she

was afraid Sunbeam would escape if she took her finger from the keyhole.

"Is it new?" asked she.
"No," said Sunbeam. "I have always had it. See, there are seven colors. When I dress myself this way men call me Solar Spectrum."

"Oh, my! what a big word!" cried Catherine.

"If you look at my dress closely you will see black lines running through the selvage," said Sunbeam. "Do you see them? Well, those are Fraunhofer lines. What do you think of that for a big word? Men tell lots of things from those lines. They can tell what stars are made of by them. But that is not for little girls."

Catherine just smiled to herself when Sunbeam said this, because she thought it couldn't possibly be so. But the funny thing about it is that Sunbeam told the truth.

"Do you see the pretty violet color?" asked Sunbeam.

"Yes, it's just like my new stockings," said Catherine.

"Well, when men want to take photographs they sift out my violet color, just like you sift sand out of gravel," explained Sunbeam.

"You can't make me believe that," said Catherine. "I know how to take pictures. I just press the button."

"I know it," explained Sunbeam. "When you press the button I slip in just as quick as a wink."

Catherine was so surprised at this that she dropped the glass spangle Sunbeam was looking through and he hopped down to the floor again.

"You see, I am a lightning change artist. All I have got to do is to roll up all of my colors into one, like you make mud pies, and I am white again."

"Teacher told me white was not a color," protested she.

"White is all the seven colors in one," said Sunbeam. "Just like a chicken is a chicken until you cut it up into drumsticks, wishbone, and wings."

Catherine thought this over and decided it must be so, as she had seen Sunbeam spread himself out in colors, just like a fan, and then roll all the colors up again.

"Aren't you going to let me go now?" asked Sunbeam. "I have to travel 24,800 miles before this time to-morrow, and I want to get started."

"Show me some more tricks and I will let you go," promised Catherine.

"Just let me look through that magnifying glass," said he. Catherine let him look through the glass, and to her surprise Sunbeam shrivelled up at one end until he was as thin as a pencil point. The floor began to smoke where the point rested.

"Stop, oh, stop!" cried Catherine. "We will burn up the summer house, and papa wants to use it for chickens."

Catherine dropped the magnifying glass in her fright, and Sunbeam was no longer a pencil point. Sunbeam can't put a point on himself unless he has a glass to look through.

"You shouldn't play with fire," said Catherine.

"I carry matches with me," smiled Sunbeam. "All I need is a sun glass to make me thin and then I can set things on fire."

"I guess you'd better go," said Catherine. "I don't want you to burn things up here. Come again, though, but leave your matches at home."

Sunbeam promised to call again some day, and Catherine let him slip out through the keyhole.

"Oh, dear," said Catherine after he was gone, "I don't know whether I have been dreaming or just talking to myself."

EVILS OF THE BORROWING HABIT.

Lucy Elliot Keeler.

The group of girls were silent as the door closed behind the borrower and her steps died away down the hall. "Good-bye, quarter," murmured one at last, and the others exclaimed, "It is a shame," and "We would not tolerate it in a less attractive girl."

"Oliver never remembers to pay her debts," one of the company replied to Alice's looks of surprised inquiry, "and she has no scruples about borrowing. We often have to do without chocolates, but not Oliver. We are all her bankers."

Oliver Thorne had never been abundantly supplied with pin money. She had little extra for candy and flowers and ice cream, but she cared greatly for those things, not only for herself, but to give to others. "Will you lend me a dollar?" she had said, timidly, one day to her roommate, and the prompt response had helped her over a difficulty. The next loan was only a dime, and when Oliver spoke of returning it her room mate laughingly repulsed her. Oliver borrowed a half dollar one day of the friend she was walking with, and treated three other girls to ice cream. She was a long time in repaying that loan, and to do it, at last, gave the money that should have been reserved for the laundry bill. She decided to use her credit at the laundry and pay at the end of the term. When Christmas came she had just enough money to buy her railroad ticket and to send a few choice flowers back to a favorite teacher. It was a week after the holidays that the above conversation took place.

As the group of girls spoke regretfully of "Oliver's ways" the girl herself walked lightly down the street, dreaming no more of the unpleasant impression she had created among her companions than of the character she was devising for herself.

When Oliver graduated from the seminary she tried to shake from her mind the remembrance of many little debts; a sheet of stamps, a knife which she had unfortunately lost, some society dues, and a few dollars in small installments. She could not pay them then, but she would send some nice presents to the girls from her home. That would be a much pleasanter way for the girls to accept such dribbles.

Once at home, the girls' claims faded from her memory. She did the house hold marketing, and the household pocketbook was often called upon to supply her with gloves and the newest style of stationery. Once a silver dollar fell from her brother's coat pocket as she brushed his clothes. "Just what I need," she exclaimed. "I will borrow it." It did not trouble her much, a few weeks later, finding her father out of his office, to open his money drawer and take a small sum. "It is all the same," she said to herself; "I will pay the milliner, instead of having the bill sent to him."

To-day the sweet girl face, which her schoolmates had found so winning, bears a hardened, careless expression. Oliver Thorne has no friends, and few seek her society. She finds it difficult to borrow even a new book from a neighbor, and drafts are frequently sent from other towns to be collected from her by the local banker. She is distrusted by every one.

It is vain for her to plead that, had circumstances been otherwise, she would never have erred. Conduct is only character made visible; circumstances only bring out latent defects, and do not create them. We prepare ourselves, says George Eliot, for sudden deeds, "by our habitual choice of good or evil."
—From "If I Were a Girl Again."