

MAKING FRIENDS WITH OUT-DOORS.

I count it supreme good fortune for a child to early learn the love of mother earth. It is hard to begin that lesson later in life. Of all the kindnesses I owe to the love-guided wisdom of my father and mother, there is hardly one for which I thank them so much as for sending me every summer, when a child, to spend two or three months upon a lonely farm in one of the hill towns of New England. I think the pure and simple happiness of those days sank deep in my blood. I remember no conscious ecstasies in the beauty of nature, but long happy days to which her companionship lent a half-conscious, ever-present delight. I remember the since unknown beauty and freshness of the early mornings, and the boyish races to the favorite tree under which the few great rosy apples, fallen in the night, lay in the dewy grass. I remember the feeling to my bare feet of the pasture over which we scampered through the day like young colts. The little brook where we built dams and raced the boats we had whittled out in the winter; the rocky, forest-covered ledges we climbed to cut fish-poles and gather birch bark and hunt the chestnuts that gleamed brown amid the grass or nestled in half-open, velvet-lined burrs; the shaking open of the heavy swaths of wet grass behind the mowers, and sharing their lunch of dough-nuts and cheese; the "raking after" the haycart, and the excitement of hurrying a load into the barn before a threatening thunder-shower; the making of elder popguns and corn stalk fiddles, and the setting of squirrel-traps; the Sunday morning rides to the meeting house on the hill; the sacred and thrilling hush that on that day lay upon the woods and fields; the falling of the cool evening shadows; the cry of the whippoorwill and the chirp of the August crickets,—it all comes back to me now. I think it has never gone away, but blended with the springs of the life-current. Children are so naturally drawn to nature! They love the grass, the dirt, the water as if some sure instinct drew them straight to the lap of their great mother. Let them learn to know and to love her.—*From The Way of Life, by George S. Merriam.*

HOW SPONGES ARE CAUGHT

A correspondent of a New Haven paper tells how they fish for sponges in the Bahamas: When a vessel arrives at the fishing ground, it is anchored and the men, in small boats, proceed to look for sponges in the water below. The water is a beautiful

light blue color, and so clear, a sixpence can easily be seen on the white, sandy bottom, in thirty-five or forty feet of water. Of course, when there is no wind, and the surface of the water is still, the sponges are easily seen; and when a gentle breeze is blowing; a "sea-glass" is used. A sea-glass consists of a square pine box, about twenty inches in length, a pane of glass about ten by twelve inches, placed in one end, water tight. To use it, the glass end is thrust into the water, and the face of the operator is placed close to the other. By this means the wave motion of the water is overcome, and the bottom readily seen. Sponges, when seen on the bottom, attached to rocks, look like a big black bunch. They are pulled off their natural beds, by forked hooks, which are run down under the sponge, which is formed like the head of a cabbage, and the roots pulled from the rocks. When brought to the surface, it is a mass of soft, glutinous stuff, which, to the touch, feels like



SCHOOL-HOUSE AND CHAPEL AT MBUA FIJI.

soap or thick jelly. When a small boat load is obtained, they are taken to the shore where a crawl is built, in which they are placed to die, so that the jelly substance will readily separate from the firm fibre of the sponge. These crawls are built by sticking pieces of brush into the sand, out of the water, large enough to contain the catch. It takes from five to six days for the insects to die, when the sponges are beaten with small sticks, and the black, glutinous substance falls off leaving the sponge after a thorough washing, ready for market. To the fisherman generally, the occupation is not a lucrative one. I am told the wages will hardly average three dollars per week, besides board. There is but little diving for sponges, except for a particularly fine bunch which cannot be gotten by the hook. Different qualities are found growing side by side, although in certain regions the finer and more valuable sponges are found.—*Boston Budget.*

WRENS LEARNING TO SING.

A wren built her nest in a box so situated that a family had an opportunity of observing the mother-bird instructing the young ones in the art of singing peculiar to the species. She fixed herself on one side of the opening in the box, directly before her young, and began singing over her whole song very distinctly. One of the young then attempted to imitate her. After proceeding through a few notes, its voice broke, and it lost the tune. The mother immediately recommenced where the young one had failed, and went very distinctly through with the remainder. The young bird made a second attempt, commencing where it had ceased before, and continuing the song as long as it was able; and when the note was again lost, the mother began anew where it stopped, and completed it. Then the young one resumed the tune, and finished it. This done, the mother sang over the whole series of notes a second time with great precision,

and a second of the young attempted to follow her. The wren pursued the same course with this as with the first; and so with the third and fourth. This was repeated day after day, and several times a day.—*Our Dumb Animals.*

CONTRARY BILLY.

Billy was a pedler's horse. Every day he drew a large waggon along the country roads. This large waggon was loaded with tins and brooms. It was a heavy load to draw. He stopped at all the houses, so that his master could sell the brooms and tins. One day after he had trotted along for several miles, Billy stopped where there was no house in sight. "Go along!" said his master. "I won't!" said Billy. This is the way Billy said "I won't." He set his fore feet out. He laid back his ears and shook his head. His master got out of the waggon and patted him on the neck. Billy would not stir.

He moved all the harness here and there, and patted him more. Billy would not stir. He talked to him in a very pleasant tone. But Billy would not stir. What was to be done? The pedler wished to sell his brooms and tins, and go home to supper. But he could not do this if Billy refused to do his part. He went to the back of the waggon. A gentleman who passed by thought he was going to whip the horse with some heavy tiling. Instead, the pedler took a pail from the waggon. There was some meal in this pail. He showed this to Billy, then he walked on and set the pail down. Billy could see the pail. Pretty soon Billy lifted his ears. He looked very good natured. He went forward to the pail. Then his master let him eat the meal. Then he put the pail back in the waggon, and Billy trotted off briskly with his load. The meal was better for Billy than the whip.—*Little Folk's Reader.*

SWEET PILLOW THOUGHTS.

A gentleman had amassed a large property, and people looking on would say that now he could rest at ease and peace. He had money enough. But the man himself found that he never was so ill at ease. His pillow was robbed of sleep. He was haunted nightly by fears of losses and money difficulties, which the sound-sleeping poor man knew nothing of. He did not go to a physician for a sleeping draught; he did something better. He sat down one morning and made out a list of people and causes he would like to help, and before nightfall had given away thirty thousand dollars. That night his sleep was sweet and refreshing, and he always regarded it as a most excellent investment of the money. He had hit on a remedy for sleeplessness that no doctor would ever have been likely to suggest to him, but one that did the work well.

Many people are troubled with serious wakefulness who have no such sums to give away. But all can do kind deeds, or speak sweet words, which do good to others, and the remembrance of such little charities are sweet thoughts to take to the pillow. Worry keeps people awake far more than happiness. The blessings of God and His precious promises are the softest pillow on which to rest a weary troubled head. "So He giveth His beloved sleep."—*Child's World.*

BE COURAGEOUS and noble-minded; our own heart, and not other men's opinions of us, forms our true honor.—*Schiller.*