

Children's Department.

HOW TO LEARN A LESSON.

An easy lesson may appear
Too hard at first for me,
Although to others very clear
And simple as can be.

If with good will I try to learn,
Soon I may find it plain;
But if from it in haste I turn,
Hard it will still remain.

It will not do to think or say—
"Tis of no use to try;"
To give it up is not the way,
Nor yet to fret or cry.

The way to make that lesson plain,
Which now too hard I find,
Is but to try, and try again,
With all my heart and mind.

I know not what I may get through
In time, with proper care;
What others have done I may do,
And their reward may share.

THE BUILDERS.

(Continued.)

He ceased speaking and was gone. A sudden sound made me look round. The sky had become dark with clouds; an oppressive stillness was in the air. Then came one bright flash, and a crash of thunder which seemed to shake the very earth. Peal after peal, flash after flash; a lurid blue light showing for a moment every stone in its brightness—then a crash which was not thunder—and a very bitter cry. The rain descended in torrents, and the storm passed away; a gentle breeze sprang up and rustled the leaves of the trees; but I looked not at this. The affrighted birds burst forth once more into their joyous song, the blue sky appeared, but I cared not for it. For the scattered ruins of the building were before me,—bright jewels broken and displaced,—and where Francis's building had stood crouched the boy in a wild agony of grief.

"It is gone—all gone—and there is no time to rebuild it. It was so fair and beautiful, I had spent all my time on it, and now it is destroyed."

For a long time he lay there, too miserable to move, too dejected for fresh efforts.

"Be thankful you were not crushed in its fall, my child," said a kind voice, and I saw once more the old man appear.

"Thankful!" cried the boy bitterly. "Ah! you do not know." Perhaps he was right; perhaps no one could know all the hopes and fears, the long days and nights, the plans and trouble which had seemed as part of the building. No one could know how beautiful it had seemed to him in spite of his faults.

"Look," said the old man gently. And the boy saw for one moment his building not as it had seemed to him, but as it had really been, with no sure foundation, and utterly unlike the model before him.

"Can it be?" he said sadly. And I heard no more; but I saw him turn away quietly and begin once more to build, ever fixing his eyes on the great Pattern, till slowly a building true and beautiful arose and grew each day.

"It never can never be worthy," said the boy. But still he built; while often the other children would look up in awe and admiration at his work, which seemed in his own sight so poor. And the day was approaching when the Great Master would come to see the buildings and reward the good workmen. And ever brighter and grander seemed the model, though the rough winds whistled around it, and blew down many stones of the lesser buildings.

"It must be nearly time," said said Theodora one day. "See how low the sun is in the sky. Look at that distant silver light. The King must be coming."

"Where is Ralph?" said Earnest anxiously, "his building is scarce begun." But Ralph was nowhere to be seen; his stones lay around in disorder.

"If I might build his for him," said his little sister.

"But no, we cannot do that," answered Earnest, "we may only help. But listen." And a strange quietness spread along that little band of workers. The sun had sunk to rest; the flood of golden light was still in the west. Then the narrow silver streak became broader, and the light was glorious. At the same moment the vast crowd of children sank upon their knees, stretching forth their hands as if to ask something. But no words came; and with bowed heads they waited till the light had spread over all the sky. How it changed the appearance of the buildings; many which before had glistened now seemed quite dull, while the plain ones caught a reflection of the light and shone forth gloriously. The children did not see this, for their eyes were closed. They only heard the sound as of a thousand trumpets, and the rustling of ten thousand beings around them. Not till the valley was filled with these bright creatures, not till the King in all His beauty stood by the model did they look up. The King placed His hand on Ernest's building, and more beautiful than ever did it appear. "Well done, my child," said He, with a smile of approbation; and Ernest was lifted by one of these bright messengers and borne away to the Palace of the King. Then I saw Theodora look up; and her patient, weary face grew bright and radiant, and she too followed her brother. Afterwards the King laid His hand on the scattered ruins of Ralph's building. "These stones were beautiful, they might have been a fair building, but now it is too late." And of him I saw no more, he was hastily borne from the King's presence. And Francis? He was still kneeling with bent head and tightly clasped hands.

The King uttered his name. "Oh, sir," he sobbed, "forgive me, I fear I was too late." "Look up, my child," and the King touched his building, and Francis saw it more bright and glorious than any of the others. The weary, anxious look vanished from his face, and the thousand trumpets burst out into music far more lovely than mortal ear can hear. . . . And I woke, wondering still at my dream, and I looked forth into the world around me and saw the different lives of men. And I saw how some like Ralph wasted theirs in selfish enjoyment; while others, like Ernest and Theodora, were living entirely for God. And lastly I noticed some like Francis, who began their lives according to their own fancy till in mercy their plans were stopped, and then happy indeed are they if their lives are given to the Great King. And some few ever-striving, ever-longing, are daily coming nearer the Pattern of that Great Life before them.

"CHARLIE."

"Charlie" was an intelligent and affectionate little terrier dog. He was very small, yet sharp as a needle and brave as a lion. He would have laid down his life for his master, and was always ready to serve his master's friends. He invariably knew the latter after seeing them once; and any one who paid a second friendly visit to the house was sure to receive a demonstrative and joyful welcome from the little dog.

Charlie had his favourites, however, among his master's friends; and to these, like any other gentleman, he would pay frequent visits. He did not take his card-case with him. But, dispensing with ceremony, he would run up to the house at which he wished to make, say, a morning call, and jumping up at the windows, would bark until he had attracted the attention of some one within, when of course he was at once admitted. He would not stay long; but having received the greetings of the family, and been regaled with a sweet biscuit, piece of cake, or some other trifling dainty, would ask, in his way, to be let out, and then trot off to make another call or return home, according to his plans.

Another pleasing proof of the interest Charlie took in his master's friends was given by the regularity with which he would, of his own accord, escort them home when they were leaving the house after dark.

One of Charlie's greatest delights was to go out in attendance on his master, and particularly when the horse and cart were to be taken. Whenever there was the slightest sign of preparation for such a journey, Charlie was almost beside himself with joy; and once upon the road, he would run backwards and forwards, going over three times the distance of the journey, and jump

and bound with the wildest delight in front of the horse, who seemed to relish the fun quite as much as the little dog himself.

But Charlie never attempted to leave the house on Sunday. The shrewd little fellow knew by experience that on that day his place was at home. Frequently, on a Sunday evening, all the members of the family except Charlie's mistress, who was an invalid, would go to a place of worship, leaving the faithful dog to keep his mistress company and protect the house. On such occasions, as soon as the two were left alone, Charlie would jump upon the lap of his mistress, and wagging his tail, would look up into her face, as much as to say, "Don't be afraid; I'll take care of you," and then jump down, and lie quietly on the rug before the fire, ready for any emergency and attentive to the slightest sound.

Though not by any means partial to cats in general, Charlie was strongly attached to the particular pussey belonging to the house. And, to do her justice, Miss Pussey fully reciprocated the affection of the little dog; and the queerly assorted pair would lie side by side for hours on the rug in front of the fire. But there ended Charlie's fondness for the members of the feline race. If any strange cat showed itself upon the premises he would chase it away with the utmost fury.

Just another instance of Charlie's intelligence and goodness of nature, and then we shall have done. His master, who was a human man, used, on winter mornings, to throw out crumbs for the poor little hungry birds, great numbers which would come regularly to the door for this welcome meal. One of these occasions Charlie always made it his business to be present, not for the purpose of driving the birds away, but to see that they were not robbed of any portion of their breakfast. So long as only the little wild birds, such as sparrows and robins, came to eat the crumbs, Charlie would remain quiet and pleased spectator of the scene; but if one of the tame pigeons belonging to a neighbour dared to approach the spot, the little dog would fly at the intruder with the utmost rage and drive it away.

J. W. KEYWORTH.

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