

music when you should be studying spelling, your thought is unprofitable, or worse—it is a hindrance.”

“O, but I was not thinking of any of those things; they are all hard work, and I only think of them when I am obliged.”

“So much the worse. I begin to think you used too good a word when you said you were ‘thinking.’ You remind me of the cow, in the nursery rhyme, of whom it was said—

‘And standing quite still, leaning over the stream,
She was musing, perhaps, or perhaps she might dream.’”

“O mamma, I am not so silly as the cow,” cried Mary, laughing: “I can tell you my thoughts, and the cow cannot. I had just written all I could remember about the queen’s visit to Tilbury, and the Spanish armada, and then I began to fancy myself a queen like Elizabeth, or like Queen Victoria; and I was thinking of being dressed with jewels, and being so rich and great, when you spoke to me.”

“Then you awoke to find that you are in reality nothing but an idle girl, looking as if you had no powers of thought at all, while they are misemployed in building castles in the air.”

“Castles in the air, mamma! what are they?”

“Just what you have been forming now; setting up in your mind a fanciful impossibility. It is an expression often used to describe an unreal thing—a picture in the mind of something which has no foundation in truth, nor likely ever to happen. Could a house or castle stand in the air?”

“No, of course not, mamma.”

“If one appeared there, what would you call it?”

“A deception; because I know that bricks and stones cannot stand without something to rest upon, and so it could not be a real castle.”

“And do you think you will ever be a queen?”

“No, mamma, I am sure I shall not; but is there any harm in thinking what I would do if I were a queen? I should be able to do so much good.”

“Yes; I think there is harm in fancying or picturing yourself in any other person’s place, unless you could do some service by your advice. Your business is to try to do your duty in your own.”

“But, you see, my mind runs away without my leave very often; and when something rouses me, I am surprised to find where it has flown to. That is one reason, I am afraid, why lessons are so often turned back.”

“Yes, I have seen this, Mary; and it has grieved me very much lately.—God has given you a quick and lively imagination, or power of seeing and arranging things in your mind, and you are not using it in the right way. What would you think of me if I went to sit in the kitchen, and sent my servants into the parlor?”

“Why, it would be very odd, mamma; I should think something was the matter with your mind.”

“And very justly. I think, too, there must be something wrong in your mind, when you let imagination, which should be the servant of reason, turn mistress, and set up all sorts of nonsense in your mind, instead of keeping it in its proper place, as a very pleasant help in making your studies interesting.”—Library B, No. 199.

In answer to a question, avoid the monosyllables “yes” and “no,” thus: “Is your father in good health?” instead of saying, “Yes, sir,” say, “Very good, sir, thank you.”

Avoid vulgar, commonplace, or slang phrases, such as, “by jinks,” “first rate,” “I’ll bet,” &c. Betting is not merely vulgar, but sinful; a species of gambling. Gentlemen never bet.