

As years roll by the mosses form masses upon which ferns and grasses can find a footing. Soon a true vegetable mould is formed—the surface of the rock has been in part decomposed by acids secreted by the delicate rootlets, affording a certain amount of sand or mineral matter.

By this time what we call *sod* is being formed, and upon this, *herbs*, tender, juicy plants, soon begin to grow; each generation adds to the depth of the soil by its own decay; and, presently, the seeds of trees wafted thither grow, and the making of the forest is begun.

What God did in the beginning was, we have every reason to believe, quite in accord with His methods now, except in that, in some way we cannot understand, by His mighty power, with a word, the Scripture tells us, He created everything that grows according to its kind. The order in which they are named is not accidental. It has deep significance for those who can see still the hand of God at work in the making of the fields.

"He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains"; "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of men." Psalm 147:8, and 104:14. He does this for small and great:—"The profit of the earth is for all; the King himself is served by the field." Eccles. 5:9.

By the life and decay of tiny moss, tender flower, and sturdy tree, the earth is furnished with the coating of mould which makes agriculture possible.

To conclude this part of our subject: Vegetable mould must be regarded as a layer of material in which, as we have said, continual processes of decomposition are going forward, a large amount of oxygen is absorbed from the air and a continual return is made by the disengagement of carbonic acid gas. Vegetable mould in this condition is called *humus*. Its presence, if not absolutely necessary, is at least most desirable for the success of the cultivation of the soil.

Our Library Table.

"A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART." W. Clark Russell.—As a writer of sea stories, this author stands pre-eminent. There is a spontaneity and breeziness in his descriptions which bring the whole scene vividly to us, and we feel ourselves to be literally on deck—in the rigging—on a barren rock—in fact, *anywhere* the author chooses to place us! Through all the exciting episodes running through these most delightful nautical incidents there is always a pretty story as well, and none sweeter than this one of "A Sailor's Sweetheart." "The Wreck of the Grosvenor," "Jack's Courtship," "Marooned," and many others testify to W. Clark Russell's wonderful ability in making his stories interesting—although nearly all on the same lines.

"TRUMPETER FRED." Captain Charles King.—This stirring and pathetic story can be read and re-read, for it is one of which you do not tire. It tells of military life in camp and action, and Indian revolts, with all the spirit in which this author excels. The story itself is beautiful, and we cannot but love young Trumpeter Fred, while in his father—the fine old Sergeant Waller, with his all-mastering love and pride in his boy, coupled with his stern and soldierly sense of duty—we have a type of character which does one good to read about. Altogether a delightful book.

"DWELLERS IN GOTHAM," Annan Dale. "DIANE OF VILLE MARIE," Blanche Macdonell. "PATH-FINDING ON PLAIN AND PRAIRIE," McDougall. (Published by William Briggs, Toronto.)—These books are quite new and well written. The first-named deals with life in New York in various phases, and treats of money-making mission work and labor problems with a pleasant story running through. The second is a story of old French-Canada—with much historical interest; the Rev. John McDougall's account of missionary life in the far-off Northwest is stirring and well told, and makes one wonder how such terrible hardships could be endured as are graphically described in his "Path-finding," etc.

NOTE.—I might mention that these three last-mentioned books, being just published, are not at present to be had in cheaper paper editions. They are well bound and printed and are one dollar each.

FELIX.

"No, Willie, dear," said mamma, "no more cakes-to-night. Don't you know you cannot sleep on a full stomach?"

"Well," replied Willie, "I can sleep on my back."

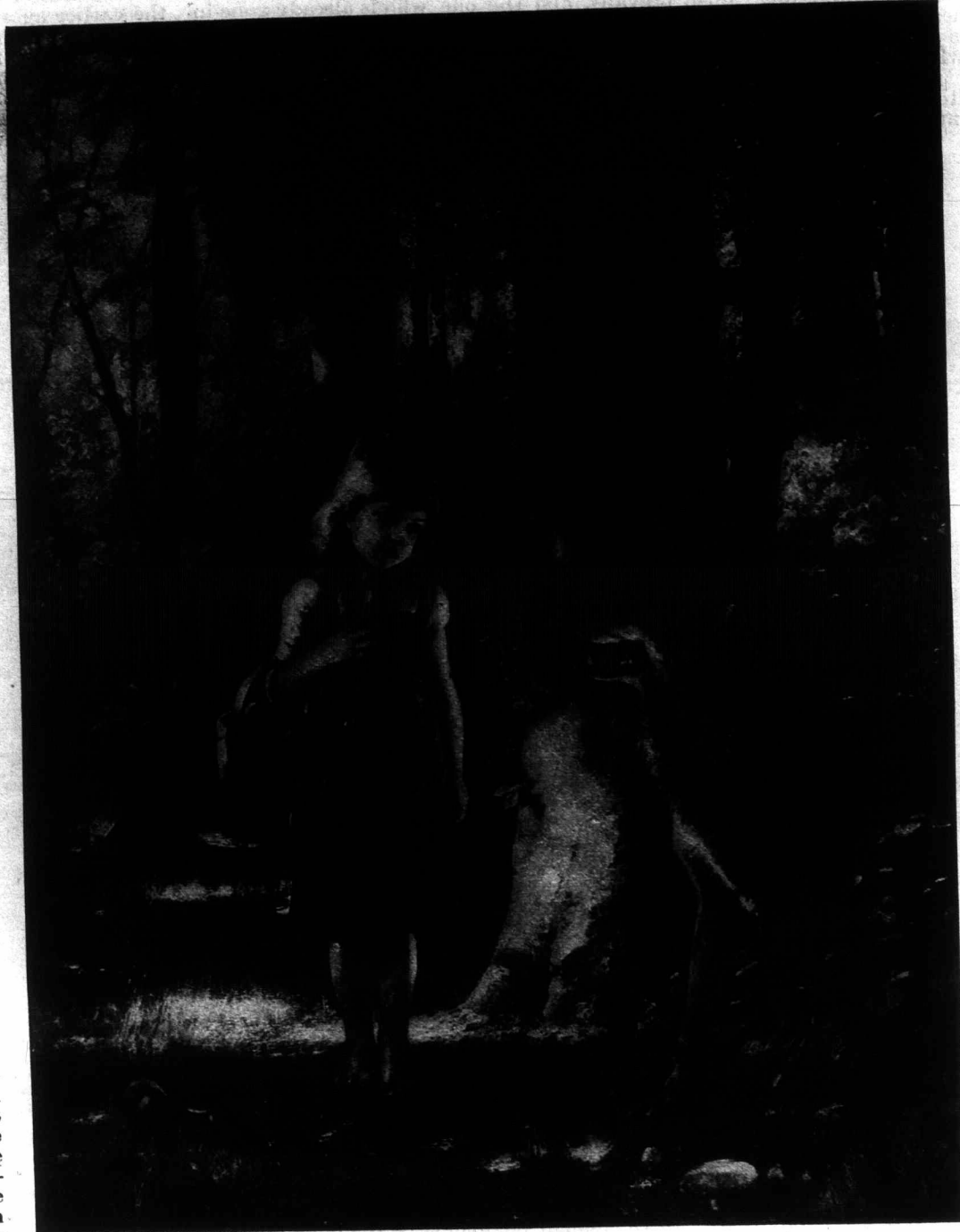


The Obsequies.

"I've been to a funeral in the garden—
The funniest funeral, Nellie," said he.
"Now, Jack, dear, I really must ask your pardon,
But funerals never are funny," said she.

"Well, but this one just is," he answered, laughing;
"So come on and see it—it's going on still."
"All right," said Nell, "but I know you are chaffing.
For I have not heard there was anyone ill."

Then away they went, hand in hand together,
Across the long grass to the big tulip tree.
'Twas raining quite hard, but why mind the weather,
When such a queer sight one is going to see!



"LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD."

And they found them all in full marching order—
The little black ants, going on two by two,
Just at the edge of the gravel-walk border—
A soldierly line of them, straight and true.

Eight little pallbearers, all very solemn,
And as stiff as though they were dressed up in tin,
Carried their comrade in front of the column,
With his small head limp, and his legs crumpled in.

"I think," said she, "the dead one's a relation,
For the mourners have on such very black clothes,
Or perhaps an aunt of quite high station—"
"Oh!" said Jack, "'twas an 'uncle,' dear, I suppose."

—Virna Sheard.

The Birds' Ball.

Spring said, "I have decided, Mother Nature, to give the birds a ball."

"What a good time they will have!" exclaimed Dame Nature.

"There ought to be flowers everywhere," suggested Spring.

"Yes, indeed," said Dame Nature, "we will have flowers and refreshments everywhere."

And then Dame Nature and Spring went to work—and such a busy, joyous time as they had getting ready for the Birds' Ball. It was no trouble, either, for all things wanted to help.

"What can we do?" said the Breezes.

"Carry the word to the flowers," said Dame Nature, "and ask them to have their fairest and largest blossoms ready to open on the day of the ball."

Then Spring said, "As we have no nightingales, how are we to send out the invitations? You know the song says:

"Spring once said to the nightingale,
'I wish to give you birds a ball!
Pray now ask the birdies all,
The birds and birdies, great and small.'"

"We have no nightingales in America, but we do have carrier pigeons, who know how to carry messages and can fly very swiftly. We can send them," said Dame Nature.

At last the day of the ball arrived; and as the sun came up above the horizon he shone upon an earth decked with flowers that were jeweled with dewdrops which sparkled in the sunlight like diamonds.

As the sun came up higher Dame Nature was heard to say: "I have provided refreshments of every kind. I hope the birds will help themselves to whatever they like best to eat."

And then such a twittering and chirruping as was heard! The robins went after worms; the humming birds sipped nectar from the flowers; the woodpeckers

ran up and down the trees after grubs; the flycatchers darted around in the air after insects—and they all found that Dame Nature had done just what she said she would, and each bird had what he liked best to eat.

Then they danced. How long? All day. That is what the song says:

"They danced all day till the sun was low;
The mother birds prepared to go;
Then one and all, both great and small,
Flew home to their nests from the birdies' ball."

Spring was happy as he traveled farther north that night, for nothing pleased him more than to make the world a gay and cheerful place.

But the owl was not happy. "Why didn't you ask me to your ball?" hooted he, crossly.

"We tried to," said Spring, "but you were sound asleep. Why don't you give one yourself at night, when you are awake?"

"That is just what I will do," said the owl, so pleased with the suggestion that he forgot to be cross. "I will give a midsummer-night's ball just as soon as the frogs begin to croak and the fireflies come."

A Word to Fathers.

How often one comes across and reads about some sad case of a young girl or youth who, in spite of God-fearing, honest parents and careful religious training, turns out to be a bitter disappointment, devoting themselves to habits which are in distinct contradiction to those of their kin. People exclaim: "Why, think of that young fellow, Brown, with such a good home and his people so strict and well-principled. Such an example as he's had!" Now, stay, my friend, are you so sure of that "example?" Perhaps you are very sure as far as regards the example set by careful home training, but this is not all that is required, as I shall try to show. Our farmers, as a rule, are extra careful as to the selection of their stock. Consider the amount of thought,

time and money spent in obtaining some fine breed of cattle, some rare fruit or vegetable, some new invention in farm implements, and all these things, mind you, are well worth all this thought, time and money. But now a question: "How much consideration is spent upon the sort of *hired man* employed?" Yet this is a matter of grave importance. The farmer wants good help, and when able, is willing to pay well for it. But does he often think much of anything besides the working capability? He will not, perhaps, knowingly employ a hard drinker, or man of known immoral character; but does he trouble to find out much about this, and does he often think much about the *language* of his hired man, or the bent of his conversation? The man is, perhaps, careful in the house, or before his employer, but what is his style of conversation when *not* under restriction? Is it such as young ears should listen to? The swearing and coarse remarks which are often heard amongst some farm hands are enough to pollute any young boy or girl. This kind of thing is easily picked up, but, alas, *not easily forgotten*. If a farmer has his young people's welfare at heart—and surely there are few who have *not*—he should consider seriously and make determined enquiries about whatever man or boy he employs, and it would be well to ascertain for himself what kind of talk is