

HER OBEDIENCE.

Far out on a Western prairie lived little Jane Austin with her father and mother. The place might have seemed lonely to some people, for there were no houses in sight of her home, nor any neighbors within several miles, but the three who lived there were quite contented; and when, a few months before my story begins, a baby came to gladden the household with his presence, their happiness was complete.

The house itself was not much more than a cabin. It had been roughly put together at a time when skilled labor was not to be had; but it had served for a shelter, and now, when prosperity had rewarded years of toil and carefulness, it was to be replaced by a larger and better dwelling. The plans had been drawn, the estimates made, and one bright summer morning Mr. Austin set out for the nearest town to purchase the lumber for it.

His wife was not afraid to be left alone with the children. She was a courageous woman, calm and self-possessed at all times, and her little daughter had inherited the same traits. There was much to be done about the house, and the two were very busy. The time passed quickly. The second day was drawing to a close, when Mrs. Austin noticed signs of a change in the weather.

"We must fasten all doors very securely to-night," she said to Jane, as they went together to the barn to feed the cattle. "I think there will be a storm before morning."

Dark clouds were gathering on the western horizon, and before they went to bed the wind was blowing in fitful, violent gusts that rattled seriously the timbers of the old house. Still no thought of great danger entered their minds, though Jane said to her mother, after she had lain down in bed beside her—

"I shall be glad when the new house is built, mamma, for the wind won't make such a noise then."

"Yes," said Mrs. Austin, "I think we shall all enjoy it; but try to go to sleep now, dear, in spite of the noise."

Acting upon her own advice, she laid her head on the pillow and was soon unconscious of all around her. How long she slept she did not know, but she was awakened by the slamming of a door. She listened for a moment, and then feeling sure that the wind had forced open the outer door of the kitchen, she arose, and slipping on her shoes, went down stairs, to fasten it.

There she found that she was quite right in her conjecture. The slight bolt had given way, and the door was swinging back and forth at the will of the wind.

But she was quite equal to the emergency. Lighting a lantern, and getting a hammer and some nails, she pushed the heavy tool chest against the door, and standing on it, she securely nailed a piece of wood across from one door-post to the other. Satisfied that all was safe, she turned to go up stairs, when, with a roar, like that of some wild beast, the tempest smote the house. There came a fearful crash, that almost stunned her and made her very heart stand still.

What had happened? Had the roof been carried away? Had the stone chimney fallen and crushed it in? The next moment, in a lull of the wind, she heard her child's voice.

"Mamma, where are you? What is the matter?"

She rushed up stairs, calling, "I am here, my darling! I am coming!"

But when she reached the bed-room door, she could go no further. She had left it open; it was now nearly closed, and some obstruction prevented her from moving it. She held up the lantern and looked through the open space.

What a scene met her gaze! The baby's crib in one corner stood untouched; but the chimney had fallen, and crashing through the roof, had made havoc of all else. Where her own head had lain on the pillow, a huge beam rested, and just beyond it she could see the white face and dilated eyes of her little girl.

"Janie," she gasped, "are you hurt? the roof has fallen in."

"No, mamma," said the child, "I am not hurt at all, but I can't get up. Something is holding me down."

The mother looked again, and now she could see that the stones and rafters had fallen in such a way as to imprison the child completely without injuring her. Oh, to be able her! to rescue her from her

perilous position! for who could tell but that some slight jar might loosen the whole mass, causing it to fall and crush the child?

But the door was immovable, and the poor woman clasped her hands in agony, realizing her own powerlessness.

"Janie," she said, presently, "listen to me, and try to be my own brave little girl. You must not move; if you do you may be hurt. If you will keep quite still, I hope you will be safe. I can do nothing to help you, my darling" (and here the mother almost broke down), "but I can go for help if you will promise me not to stir while I am gone."

"Yes, mamma," said a quivering voice. "I will try not to be afraid, if you will leave me the light."

"No, dear," said the mother, "I cannot do that, for fear of fire; you are much safer without it. You must believe that God can take care of you in the dark."

"Yes," said the child, gravely, "I know; but, O mamma! if baby should cry?"

"Never mind baby, dear. He cannot get out of the crib. It will not hurt him to cry a little, and I will be as quick as I can. Now we will ask God to be with you."

The mother knelt down and said aloud, "O my Father, I pray thee keep in safety my darling children, for Christ's sake!"

And the child's voice answered, "Amen."

There was no more hesitation now. Mrs. Austin knew what she must do, and that there was no time to be lost. Throwing on some articles of clothing that hung in a closet on the landing, she hurried to the stable.

Her husband's saddle-horse was there, a creature as gentle as he was fleet of foot. She had him saddled and bridled and was on her way in a few moments.

The storm was over, and in the Western sky the waning moon shone with a feeble light. She urged the horse to his utmost speed, for she was a fearless rider, but it seemed to her that the three miles she had to go were a hundred at least. Midway she met with an obstacle. A huge tree had been blown down directly across the road. She dismounted, and devoutly thankful that the snake-fence was one she could pull down, she tore the rails from their places, led her horse around, made another opening and proceeded.

The village was reached at last. Stopping at the first house, where the blacksmith lived, she knocked loudly at the door.

In a few moments a voice asked, "Who is there?"

"Mrs. Austin. We have had a fearful accident. My husband is away. I have come for assistance."

In a moment more the door was opened, but she would not go in.

"No, let me tell my story here. I must go back at once to my children."

In a few words she told her story. "You will need," she continued, "three or four men to help you, and, above all, a ladder long enough to reach the upper window; there is no other way of getting into the room. Now I will go back. I know I need not ask you to make all the haste you can, Mr. Green."

For answer the blacksmith turned to his son with orders to rouse the neighbors, while he himself at once left the house to harness his team and get ready the necessary tools.

Back the mother hastened along the weary way, trying to still the agony at her heart with the hope that no injury had come to her children.

The day was beginning to dawn when she reached her own gate. What was it that fell upon her listening ear? A child's voice singing, actually singing,—

"God shall charge His angel legions
Watch and ward o'er thee to keep."

For the first time Mrs. Austin burst into tears. She hastened up the stair. "Janie, my darling! are you still safe?"

"Yes, mamma; I am so glad you have come!"

There was no tremor in the little voice now.

"Baby has not cried at all. I heard him move a little and I sang my last Sunday's hymn; and then it seemed so nice I began to sing it over again. Did no one come with you, mamma?"

"I would not wait for them, dear, but they are coming soon. I think I hear them now," she added, as the sound of the wheels in the distance reached her ear. The four fastest horses in the village were bringing

strong arms and eager hearts to their assistance.

A few moments more and Mr. Green stood in the room followed by three other men, while Mrs. Austin ran down stairs and stood at the foot of the ladder.

"Take baby first," said little Jane, and the infant was handed down safe and unharmed to his mother.

"Now, little missy it is your turn; we will have you out of that in a twinkling."

But as the blacksmith approached the bed he saw that it would be no easy task to extricate the child uninjured; for with one careless touch the overhanging mass might fall and crush her.

"Gently, gently," he said waving back his eager assistants. Then, taking a screw-driver from his pocket, he soon had the closet-door off the hinges. With that and the mattress and pillows from the crib, he built up a barricade over the little girl's head.

"Now I think we can raise this broken! am."

The strong iron bars they had brought with them were placed under it.

"One moment!" said Mr. Green. "Now, my little girl, as soon as I give the word, creep out just as quickly as you can. Ready! Lift!"

The child then turned and drew herself to the edge of the bed. In an instant a pair of strong arms caught and drew her to the window, and as the three other men sprang aside, stones and mortar, beams and rafters, fell upon the bed with a frightful crash.

But at the same moment the mother saw the little white-clad figure descending the ladder, and with a cry she caught the child in her arms and then fainted away. The first moments of intense excitement had scarcely passed when one wagon after another began to arrive from the village, where the news of the disaster had rapidly spread. Little Jane was the heroine of the hour.

"It was touch and go with the little one, you may believe," said Mr. Green, with a shiver. "I don't know what ever held up the rafter, for a baby's hand could have shaken it down."

"And she lay there all the time without moving!" said one of his hearers.

"She did that. If she had kicked and struggled like any other child, the whole mass would have fallen and crushed her."

But amidst the general wonder and admiration the child herself was quite unconscious that she had done anything at all remarkable. When questioned she said simply, "Mamma said I must not move."

The good blacksmith took Mrs. Austin and the children to his own house until Mr. Austin's return, and when evening came and they lay down to rest once more, the little girl nestled close to her mother and whispered, "Don't you think God sent His angels last night to take care of us?"

"I am sure of it, my darling," her mother answered, fervently.

"So am I; but I am equally sure that the means by which His messengers do their ministry of love are often in our own power; and in this instance they worked the Divine will, partly, at least, through a little girl's obedience.—*Youth's Companion*.

TOO TIDY.

In opposition to all that is written and said of neatness, order, method, and every other virtue which goes to make up the sum of good housekeeping would a woman endanger or lose her reputation entirely if she dared to say, do not be too neat, do not be too methodical. In drawing up your rules and regulations do not imitate the Medes and Persians whose laws were unalterable. Give way sometimes. You have no doubt heard that "circumstances alter cases." It is well to remember it. Solomon has told us that there is a time when certain things should be done, and other times when the same things should not be done.

If every wife and mother would store up this injunction of the wise man in some corner of her brain and act upon it occasionally, there would be an increase of the happiness and comfort of many a home. Truly the "must" and "must not" in some houses are the grimmest of lions standing across the path of any enjoyment, or even peace. If we may use an expression which is not very far removed from slang, it is possible to get too much of a good

thing. Every one knows what a house without method is, but perhaps every one has not considered what a house with too much may come to be. A place where rules and regulations ride rough shod over inclination and comfort and mercilessly crush every feeble attempt at resistance or rebellion; where the inmates are so hedged in by "thou shalt" on the right hand, and "thou shalt not" on the left, that the one course which they may pursue with impunity is wonderfully narrow and monotonous.

Then do not be too neat. Do not give every person under your roof or, indeed, who comes in contact with you, reason to hate that innocent, well-meaning word. It must be understood that here we do not refer to personal neatness, nor the cleanliness which is "akin to godliness," and without which no woman is worthy of the name, but to that over-developed bump of order which manifests itself in a never ending tidying of every thing, and keeps up a state of perpetual semi-house-cleaning, the thought of which contracts a man's heart with fear as he turns his face homewards, which drives the children out of doors in search of a place where they may amuse themselves without molestation, or if the season will not admit of that drives them to desperation in-doors, and often reduces them to that unenviable condition in which Satan will find something for them to do. Or, perhaps, and this is a frequent case, in order to preserve the immaculate neatness of the more public part of the house, they are banished to some remote corner and there left to their own devices. This corner is often the most imperfectly lighted, warmed and ventilated apartment of the house, albeit dignified with the title of nursery. It is really a good plan to give the children one room which they may call their very own, and in which they may do as they please; but the house is their home all through, is it not? And is it advisable that their amusements and employments should always be a separate part of the home life. Let them occasionally bring their playthings where you are, let them feel free to make a little noise, and, if unavoidable, let them once in a while disturb the accustomed serenity of your dining or sewing room. Join in and show an interest in their occupations. You will add a hundred fold to their enjoyment by so doing and as much to your fondest memories in after years. Keep them as close to you as you can, you will be separated all too soon, other things than your love of order and neatness will rise up as a wall between you. The world, new ties, land and water, nay, even estrangement, and last of all death itself will separate you. Keep them close while you can.

How many world weary men and women cherish fondly, as a possession which no one and nothing can take from them, the memory of the one time when they were happy. Long ago, in the old home, care and trouble never reached them; oh, if they only could have remained children, and always been with mother. And how many more look back with bitterness, not unmingled with disgust, to a repressed, joyless childhood with recollections of little more than floors that must be kept clean, carpets which must not be walked on by other feet than those which had arrived at discretion, rooms which must not be entered, chairs which must not be sat upon, questions which must not be asked, until it seemed that whatever life or liberty they had known was what they had found in God's free air. No bright spot for them to gaze back upon. If they have found the world an unsatisfactory, disappointing place, well, it was always so; they never knew anything else. It has been a desert all through, unrelieved by even the memory of an oasis.—*Household*.

Blessed is he
whose transgression
is forgiven.