

TAKING AIM.

HERE were four little boys
Who started to go
From the very same spot
To take tracks in the snow
He who made his path straightest,
They had in their plan,
Of all the four boys
Should be their best man.

Now these four little boys
Were Philip and John,
And merry-faced Harry,
And sober-eyed Don;
The best friends in the world,
And full of invention
In play, but they seldom
Were found in a situation.

So they started together
And hurried along,
But John, Don and Harry
In one way went wrong;
The fourth made his path
Nearly straight, and they wondered,
As all tried alike,
How they three had blundered.

Then Philip replied,
"The reason is, you see,
Though no harder I tried
To succeed than you three;
I pushed for that oak,
Going forward quite ready,
While you struggled on
Without aim and unsteady."

Now you see, my dear boys,
What an useless track;
If there is a point
That you wish to reach—
A position in life
At all worth the naming,
If you gain it, it will greatly
Depend on your aiming.

A LITTLE TALK ABOUT JESUS.

(See first page.)

SUPPER is over, and while mamma is clearing away the tea things, Mamie draws a stool up in front of the fire to let Robbie warm his feet before he is undressed and carried away to bed. Robbie is not inclined to sit still, however. The bricks in front of the fireplace are nice and warm, and he says he likes to "stand on them barefooted." So, to keep him quiet, Mamie talks to him about another little child, who was once born into the world. Robbie's brown eyes open wide with wonder, when Mamie tells him how Herod the king searched for the little child, and finally killed all the babies for the sake of putting Jesus to death.

Robbie is very quiet now and listens with a great deal of interest, as he hears how this little child became a man who healed all the sick folks who came to him, gave sight to the blind, and even caused dead persons to live again. He cannot understand why the people were so wicked as to kill one who was so good to them; and he looks very indignant as he talks about it. He wishes he could have seen Jesus and been blessed like the little children whom Christ held in his arms when he was on earth.

Perhaps some of the children who read the PLEASANT HOURS may have wished the same. The writer remembers having done so when she was a little girl.

But Christ's invitations to the children were not alone to the little one, who lived at the same time that he did, but to all the children who will love him and obey him. When he said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," he intended that the children of all coming ages should have his blessing, as well as the little ones he held in his loving arms. He asks lovingly for the heart of every child to day, and wants you to give yourself to him. He has a work for each one

of you, which no grown person can do. It is a beautiful thought and full of comfort to us, that we can go to Jesus in prayer and faith, just as truly as those did who lived in Christ's time.

"Yet still to his footstool in prayer I may go,
And ask for a share in his love;
And if I thus earnestly seek him below,
I shall see him at I hear him above.

"In that beautiful place he has gone to prepare
For all who are washed and forgiven;
And many dear children are gathering there;
For of such is the kingdom of heaven."
M. L. CADY.

OWLS.

"As wise as an owl" is a very common expression; and it must have been derived from the bird's appearance, for he shows no more wisdom than other birds. Owls live in deserted buildings, out-houses, and hollow trees and during the day-time never leave their retreat unless forced to do so; for their eyes are so formed that the glare of the sunlight causes them evident uneasiness, if not pain. They are unable to distinguish objects clearly in so full a light. At night they are full of activity. They destroy great numbers of rats and mice, killing more than they can eat, if possible, and storing them up for future use. They are much like winged cats in several respects.

The chief peculiarity of owls is their mode of flying and their quick sense of hearing. Their food being mostly mice and other small animals which easily hide themselves in the ground, great silence and clear sight are necessary, as well as quick hearing; so we find the wing of an owl is provided with feathers so remarkably soft and pliant that in striking the air they make no rushing sound as the feathers of other birds do. There is something in the strange appearance and silent flight of owls that has made them often feared; and superstitious people have thought them always ominous of evil. But there is hardly a more useful bird anywhere. Its food consists of vermin and insects that would do great harm to the crops; and the farmers ought to be thankful to the quiet owls who go around the fields in the dark and pounce upon all the mice and insects that would injure the corn.

A writer in the *American Naturalist* who had read a story about an owl wringing his own head off by looking at a man who was walking around him, tested the matter by experiment. He obtained a specimen and placed it on the top of a post. "It was not difficult," says the writer, "to secure his attention; for he never diverted his gaze from me while I was in his presence. I began walking rapidly around the post a few feet from it, keeping my eyes fixed upon him all the while. His body remained motionless, but his head turned exactly with my movements. When I was half-way round his head was directly behind. Three quarters of a circle were completed and still the same twist of the neck and the same stare followed me. One circle, and no charge. On I went, twice around, and still that watchful stare and steady turn of the head. On I went, three times around, and I began really to wonder why the head did not drop off, when all at once I discovered what I had failed to notice before. When I reached half-way round from the front,

which was as far as he could turn his head to follow my movements with comfort, he whirled it back through the whole circle so instantaneously, and brought it facing me again with such precision, that I failed to detect the movement, although I was looking intently all the time."

Owls are found in all parts of the world, and in all climates. They are frequently met in the deepest solitudes of the forest. In the one hundred and second psalm, sixth verse, we read, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert." This is significant of the extreme loneliness and sorrow of the winter.

THE OLD MAN OF DARTMOOR.

THERE was an old man of Dartmoor who, for many years, obtained his livelihood by looking after the cattle distributed over these wild moorland hills. At last, through infirmity and old age, and the constant and unusual exposure to all kinds of weather, his sight entirely failed him, so that he had to seek an asylum in one of the West of England infirmaries, to end his brief remaining days. While there he was frequently visited by one of his granddaughters, who would occasionally read to him portions of the word of God.

One day, when the little girl was reading to him the First Epistle of John, when she reached the seventh verse, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," the old man raised himself and stopped the little girl, saying, with all earnestness:

"Is that there, my dear?"

"Yes, grandpa."

"Then read it to me again; I never heard the like before."

The little girl read again:

"And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

"You are quite sure that is there?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Then take my hand and lay my finger on the passage, for I should like to feel it."

She took the old blind man's hand and placed his bony finger on the verse, when he said:

"Now read it to me again."

The little girl read, with her soft, sweet voice:

"And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

"Are you quite sure that is there?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Then, if anyone should ask how I died, tell them that I died in the faith of these words:

"And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

And with that the man withdrew his hand, his head fell softly back on the pillow, and he silently passed into the presence of Him whose "blood cleanseth us from all sin."

A LITTLE GIRL'S TALK.

A FEW Sundays ago I heard a little girl's talk over her pocket-book, before church time. Her brother said to her:

"Where's your money? There will be a contribution to-day."

She went to get her pocket-book. "I have two silver ten cents and a paper one."

Her brother said:

"A tenth of that is three cents."

"But three cents is such a stingy little to give. I shall give this ten cents. You see I would have had

more here, only I spent some for myself last week; it would not be fair to take a tenth of what is left, after I have used all I wanted."

"Why don't you give the paper ten cents? The silver ones are prettier to keep."

"So they are prettier to give. Paper ten cents look so dirty and shabby. No, I'll give good things."

So she had put one ten cent in her pocket, when some one said:

"I hope we can raise that three hundred dollars for home missions to-day."

Then that little girl gave a groan.

"Oh, is this home missions day? Then that other silver ten cents has to go, too." And she went to get it, with another doleful groan.

I said: "If you feel so distressed about it, why do you give it?"

"Oh, because I made up my mind to always give twice as much to home missions as anything else, and I shall just stick to what I made up my mind to."

Now this little affair set me to thinking.

1. We should deal honestly with God in giving. "It is not fair," said the little girl, "to count your tenth after you have used all you want."

2. We should deal liberally in giving. If the fair tenth is a pretty sum, let us go beyond it and give more.

3. Let us give our best things. That which is the nicest to keep is also the nicest to give.

4. Let us give until we feel it.—
Selected

"WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY."

THIS is a very old proverb, and a very true one. Sometimes we forget it though, and say "I can't" before we have really tried at all. Some years ago a few kind people made up their minds to try to get hold of all the chimney-sweeps in Dublin and give them an education. One day a little fellow came who was asked if he knew his letters.

"Oh yes," he answered.

"Can you spell?"

"Oh yes."

"Can you read?"

"Oh yes."

"What books did you learn from?"

"P'case, sir, I never had a book."

"Then who was your schoolmaster?"

"I never went to school at all."

The gentleman stared, for it seemed very strange that a boy should be able to read and spell, and yet never have had a master.

"Then however did you learn?" he asked.

The little boy smiled, and linked his arm in that of a sweep somewhat older than himself.

"Please, sir, Jim taught me the letters over shop doors as we went to our work, and now I know all the words by heart; and if you'd kindly let us have some books to read and teach us to do sums and writing, we'd be very thankful."

Can't you fancy what good pupils these two boys became, and how they delighted in reading in books instead of making their necks ache by peering up at the shops.

A LITTLE child of seven or eight said that when the Bible speaks of "children's children," it must mean dolls.