

was the only one among them who could count the days remaining to him on the fingers of one hand. His friends seemed as sorry to have him leave them as he was to go, and numerous were the anathemas hurled at the innocent men in the city who bought and paid for Harold Fletcher's time and services.

"If we were all going to break up together, 'twouldn't be half so bad," Tom Bassett remarked on the last day of Harold's vacation, "but it'll be a poser to get along without you."

"How do you suppose I'll be getting along?" Harold asked, ruefully. "It's a hundred times harder for me, Tom."

The day was a perfect one. The place they had chosen for their last picnic was a remarkably beautiful one. Harold looked about him, mentally and miserably comparing it to the dingy store in Beekman Street to which he was to return. Duty at that moment put on her most repulsive aspect. "I wouldn't go an inch if I were you," Dana Bassett, asserted, emphatically.

"Can't you get out of it, somehow?" asked Dana's cousin, Louisa Culver, a girl whose honest face and gentle manner made the words very odd and surprising.

"Send him word you can't come, and let him help himself."

"Tell him your father's sick. It's the truth, anyway."

Yes, it was the truth, in letter, but not in spirit, as they all knew. Mr. Fletcher's rheumatism was an old story. The idea of making it serve as an excuse for his own absence from business was so ludicrous to Harold that he laughed outright, in spite of his dismal feelings.

"You're sick yourself, ain't you, Harold?" Tom asked, insinuatingly, seeing the cloud which instantly settled on his face again.

"Yes, heart-sick and homesick too," Harold answered.

"Then write and tell him so," Tom urged. "I would. A few days won't make any difference to him, but it will make a great deal to you and all the rest of us. If you're sick, he can't say anything, anyhow."

There was a large and thoughtless chorus to the same effect. No one seemed to hesitate in urging this subterfuge on Harold Fletcher, though probably not one among them but would have thought twice about it if it had been himself who was to use it.

Tom Bassett proposed accompanying him home, to prop up his feeble resolution until it could be put into effect, and the party separated with the understanding that they were to meet the next day, not to accompany Harold to the depot, as had been first proposed, but for a fishing excursion some distance from home.

"I never did so mean a thing in my whole life," Harold said, vehemently, as he sat down to write his letter.

"You won't feel so about it after the thing's done and off your mind," Tom suggested.

The letter was written,—not a long one, brevity being more consistent with the assumed illness of the writer,—and Tom Bassett departed, well satisfied, to mail the letter as he went home by the post-office.

The evening, what was left of it, was a most miserable one to Harold, and it was impossible for him to go to sleep after he had gone to bed. He heard the clock strike midnight, then one, two, three, and then he sprang out of bed, his mind being fully made up on the subject which engrossed it.

He dressed himself as rapidly as possible, and finished packing his valise, already nearly prepared for his journey. He wrote a hurried note to his father, stating that he had concluded to leave that day, after all, and had decided to take the early train. Then, seizing his bag, he started off for his three-mile walk to the depot.

The morning was chilly, the valise heavy, and his thoughts of the dreariest description. To catch the train which was to carry his letter to New York was his sole object. He accomplished it, and as the cars thundered along he had plenty of time to reflect on what he had truly called the meanest action of his whole life.

He reached New York at night, and early the next morning was at the store, but it was a difficult matter to recover his letter before it would fall into Mr. Steele's hands. None of Harold's work lay in the office where the mail was delivered.

He kept a sharp watch for the postman, and slipped into the counting-room as soon as he had left it. As he searched through the pile of letters for his own, and drew it

out from among the rest, he heard a voice at his elbow,—"Well done, sir!"

He turned to confront Mr. Steele. In his hurry and excitement he had not heard him enter.

"I—I—you expected me to-day, I suppose, sir?" he stammered, his distress of mind showing itself in every feature.

"Not in my counting-room, or meddling with my correspondence," Mr. Steele replied. "How can you explain your presence here? Have you anything to say?"

"Only this, sir," Harold's voice was husky. He held out the letter as he spoke. "It is one I wrote to you, sir, and I wanted to take it back."

"Humph!" Mr. Steele put on his spectacles as he seated himself at his desk.

"What should you want to take it back for, having once written it?" he asked, as he examined the envelope. "To all intents and purposes it is my letter now. I have a right to read it."

"Yes, sir," Harold was quite crushed. After his many hours of profound misery, to bring additional disgrace upon himself in trying to undo his wrong doing!

"You can open it, anyway," he said, on the strength of a sudden desperate impulse. "I would like you to know just how mean and contemptible I've been. I want you to know," he added, in a choked voice, as Mr. Steele appeared to hesitate; and taking the letter, he opened it himself and placed it before his employer.

"And you wrote this to me, Harold! This—lie!" Mr. Steele exclaimed, after reading it. "I would not have believed it of you!"

"I am ashamed of myself, and I beg your pardon!" His voice broke; he could not go on.

LITTLE BY LITTLE.

Oh, what a hurry he was in! He rushed through the house, slamming all the doors behind him. He had something to show papa, and mamma, and Auntie Mag. On his slate was a wonderful picture; two ladies in long dresses, and elegant hats, walking across a railway track, with the steam-engine coming pell-mell after them.

What a talk they all made over that picture, to be sure! Aunt Mag said the curl of the plumes on their hats was just as natural as life! Mamma said he certainly had a wonderful talent for drawing faces.

And papa said he must confess that that steam-engine was very well drawn. "I wish it were on paper," said mamma, "I would really like to keep it." Then she stooped down and kissed Roger. And Roger said never a word. Why should he? He'll tell you. It was Alice Parsons who drew that picture. She had borrowed Roger's slate in the morning, and at recess had given it to him with that lovely picture drawn with colored pencils.

When Roger rushed into the house, he had not meant to claim the picture as his; but when they all made so much talk over it, and his mother kissed him, he could not bear to say a word. He comforted his naughty little heart by telling it that he hadn't told anybody he drew it. Hadn't he?

"When did you draw the picture?" mamma asked, as they sat down to dinner. "I hope you didn't take the time from your spelling-lesson?"

"No, ma'am," said Roger, with a red face. "He did it at recess," said Aunt Mag. "It was raining so I suppose they couldn't play out-doors. Didn't you Roger?"

"Yes," said Roger. His soup almost choking him.

Mamma asked where he got colored pencils.

And Roger muttered that he borrowed them of a boy.

They would keep talking about that hateful picture. Papa asked him what ladies he took for models, when he had studied a steam-engine so carefully. After dinner it was worse and worse. Mamma set the slate on the mantel, and said she was going to show it to Uncle Dick. She did show it to a lady and to the minister who asked more questions, and Roger had to tell half a dozen falsehoods. How did it end? Why, about five o'clock came Alice Parsons with a note for Roger's mother, and while she waited for an answer her eyes went roving around the room and saw the slate.

"Why, Roger?" she said, "you kept that picture! I made those ladies for mamma and Cousin Kate. They truly did 'most get run over by an engine.'"

Then it all came out. What a time they had! I don't know who had the heaviest heart, papa or mamma, or the boy. I know he shed a good many tears; but it takes more than tears to wash away the stains of sin.

"I truly didn't ever mean to do it, mamma," Roger said, when he was getting ready for bed. "I brought it home to show you how nicely Alice could draw; but when you all thought it was so nice, I couldn't say a word. I didn't mean to tell what wasn't true."

"But you did say what was not true," said mamma.

"Yes'm," said Roger, "I couldn't seem to get out of it."

"Ah, you did it by letting Satan make you keep still when you ought to have spoken!" mamma said very sadly.—Penny.

THE OLD BABY CARRIAGE.

BY HOPE LEDYARD.

"What kind of neighbors does thee have, Anna?" asked aunt Eunice, after she had been staying a week with her nephew's young wife. "I have not seen any one drop in of a morning, and surely the neighborhood must be remarkably healthy, for thee has not left me once to run in to a sick friend or ailing child."

"To tell you the truth, aunt Eunice," she said, "don't know my neighbors—yet."

"What! Does it take thee so long child? Thee has lived here two years, is it not?"

"Yes, but—" the young wife hesitated. Somehow it was so difficult to make "John's aunt" understand. But the old lady was waiting for an answer, and Anna, after a moment's pause, blurted out: "To tell the truth, aunt Eunice, the people in this street are not in our set."

"What set is that?"

"It is the—well—I suppose I might call it the best set in town."

"But the best people do not keep apart, do they? Surely he who was the best one who ever lived did not."

"I—I—didn't mean best in just that sense," said Anna. Then, yielding to a better impulse, she seated herself on a foot-stool at the old lady's feet, and taking her hand said: "Auntie, all these notions seem so flat and silly when you are here. Teach me to look at things as you do—you know I never had a mother."

Aunt Eunice stroked the sunny head and said gently: "Learn of Christ, child. Sit at his feet. For instance, let us think how he would act toward the people in this street, and then take his place—act in his name. I noticed a bright little girl limping by on crutches—he always healed a lame creature."

"That little girl lives at the other end of the block; she is fond of flowers, for she often stops to watch me when I'm attending to my plants."

"Could thee do nothing for her? I thought thee said there were more plants than thee could care for this fall."

"To be sure! I never thought of that. I'll make her a hanging basket. Now, aunt Eunice, who else have you noticed? I think this is delightful."

"I have seen an old man a few doors off, sitting at the basement window; he looks very forlorn and dreary."

"Oh, that old man! I couldn't go near him. That's a horrid house. They are all untidy. The mother scolds, the children fight, the father drinks, and the old grandfather is dirty and wretched looking."

"Yet Christ came, not to call the righteous (I suppose thy best set are among those), but sinners."

There was a moment's silence, then Anna said reluctantly: "Perhaps I might send him over a bowl of soup or a broiled chicken."

"Only if there has become his friend. But let us leave the old man for a time—the bony baby next door has interested me."

"But such a terribly old-fashioned baby carriage! I did feel as if Mrs. Kittredge might be a real neighbor for me, but when she walked by rolling that old carriage, I—"

"It is not a nice word, my daughter, but the world's people call that 'snobbish.' Now I have scraped acquaintance with thy next door neighbor, and that shabby baby carriage has a history that is very touching."

"Do tell it me, aunt Eunice."

"Thee has noticed, no doubt, that there is a good eight years between the two children in that house. Well, it seems that ten

years ago, that carriage thee so much despises was bought—one of the best in its day—for Mrs. Kittredge's first baby, a bonny, winsome child that lived to be three years old and then, after a few short hours of suffering, was taken home. The mother says she parted with almost everything that belonged to the little one, but, as another baby had come and was using Etta's carriage, that was kept, and when Bess had no need of it, the wagon was put up in the garret and seemed to grow more and more precious as the years went by. About a year ago Mrs. Kittredge found the moth had eaten the lining and the leather was growing hard and dry, and speaking of it to her husband, he, good man, to please her, spent his next holiday in re-lining the carriage, oiling the springs and polishing the leather. Both husband and wife agreed that the carriage ought to be used for some child, yet could not resolve to let it go. The very next day a friend called to take Mrs. Kittredge to visit a home, where children who were friendless are cared for. There she saw a little one whose big blue eyes—but I need not describe the baby; thee must have noticed its beauty as it rides in the dear old carriage."

"And I thinking her mean to use such an old affair, when she has actually adopted a baby! Aunt Eunice, that always seemed to me the most unselfish thing anyone can do—to take another person's child!"

"Not so unselfish if one has 'respect unto the recompense of the reward.' Our Lord has said, 'Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye do it unto me,' and so in taking a child into thy home, in his name, thou art sure of his presence."

Another silence, as aunt Eunice prayed that her words might prove words in season to the childless wife.

"Aunt Eunice," said Anna after a time, "I'm going to scrape acquaintance with that old man, try to persuade Mrs. Kittredge to be my friend, and perhaps find a baby that needs a home and mother-love, only as I haven't an old carriage she can have the very latest style!"

Three years later aunt Eunice held a little morsel done up in flannel on her lap as she sat in Anna's bedroom.

"I shan't have to buy him a carriage, aunt Eunice, as Daisy's will do. I should be the best kind for her, as I told you I should."

"And now does thee regret having taken a child in His name?"

"Not for one moment. I feel as if God held back this gift to teach me the joy of taking Daisy in His name. The children are both mine—given by God."

"Mrs. Kittredge's love, ma'am," said the girl, appearing with a bunch of flowers, and these flowers; and the old gentleman hopes you are getting along nicely, and please ma'am, Miss Carrie hopes she can see the baby soon."

"Messengers from my neighbors, Auntie! How much I owe to you! Why, I know almost every one in the block now."

"Are they in thy set, Anna?"

"Yes indeed! children of one Father, servants of the one Master. Auntie, 'How good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.'"

WHAT IS THE USE OF SNAKES?

Persons who dislike snakes continually ask, "What is the use of them?" That they are not without a use will, I hope, appear. In the habit of 'going on their belly' lies one of their greatest uses, because that enables them to penetrate where no larger carnivorous animal could venture—into dark and noisome morasses, bog jungles, swamps among the tangled vegetation of the tropics, where swarms of the lesser reptiles on which so many of them feed would otherwise outbalance the harmony of nature, die and produce a pestilence. Wondrously constructed for their place of abode, they are able to exist where the higher animals could not. While they help to clear these inaccessible places of the lesser vermin, they themselves supply food for a number of the smaller animals which, with many carnivorous birds, devour vast numbers of young snakes. The hedgehog, the weasel, the ichneumon, the rat, the peccary, the badger, the hog, the goat and an immense number of birds keep snakes within due limits, while the latter perform their part among the grain-devouring and herbivorous lesser creatures. Thus beautifully is the balance of nature maintained.—C. C. Hopley.