

up our petitions and pleading for their acceptance on account of the power and mercy and goodness of our God. "This I trust He will do of His mercy and goodness."—Bp. Qu'Appelle.

## Family Department.

### Little Trouble-the-House.

BY L. T. MEADE.

CHAPTER VI.—THE CAT HAS JUST EATEN SUCH A LARGE MOUSE.

(Continued.)

"Well! I was boiling over with passion, but still I thought, as the reason I had was so very, very great, that I'd try and do what she said. But now," stopping and looking full in Miss Cecil's face, "I can't—she's cruel—she had our mouse ate up—our darling, pretty Jolly's gone—he never did *her* no harm, but she fetched the cat and had him ate up; so, Polly, I take back what I said a fortnight ago; and I'll never, no, never again obey Miss Cecil;" and with these words the angry child ran out of the room, leaving his little sister and the governess alone.

"Your brother is a naughty boy, Polly," said Miss Cecil; "he has spoken in a very impertinent manner to me. Still I am sorry the mouse is gone, and I don't mind your telling him so. I did not know it was a pet of his;" and then she returned to her interrupted letter.

Meanwhile Milles, snatching up his cap, ran out of the house. He had regained his liberty; the unbearable restraint of the past fortnight was gone; he was a free boy once more.

He made use of his liberty to do the thing he longed most to do, the thing his governess and nurse had forbidden his doing—he went to visit his mother's grave.—

A week ago, missing him, they had discovered him fast asleep there, his head pillowed on the long damp grass, undried tears on his cheeks.

In alarm and even terror as to the consequences, they had desired him never to venture into the church-yard alone again. He had longed to go, but for the sake of his promise he had obeyed them. Now he could do as he liked, and this was his strongest present wish.

He bounded across the fields, found the little stile which the villagers used as a short cut, and soon was lying on the grass, as close as he could be to that beloved presence.

"Mother!" he said aloud, "I can't be good; I have tried, oh, so very, very hard; but 'tis useless; I can't grow up good, mother!"

Oh! why did his mother not answer him? why did she not advise him? why was there nothing but silence?—the silent sky overhead, the silent grass beneath him, the silent, silent dead a little lower still. He cried, he cried terribly, as this great, strange silence grew into his little heart. He had been accustomed to sob away his griefs on his mother's breast; but that breast was cold now, and could no longer respond to his agony. He had had vague childish ideas what would happen when he came to this grave—of God and the angels—above all, of his mother being nearer to him than elsewhere; but he did not feel it so; God seemed far away. His mother was with God, so they both were far away.

He never knew that all the time the arms of God were under him, and the hand of God leading him.

It takes a long time for a little child—aye, it takes a long time for a man—to believe this.

Nevertheless, such was the case—God was leading Miles. He had tried very hard to be good; he had made a great and brave effort, but he had tried in his own strength—God would show him a better way.

Meanwhile he had failed—all his resolutions had come to nothing.

It requires a very noble heart, indeed, to have courage in the midst of failure, and the little childish heart of Miles sank utterly now.

Lying by his mother's grave he felt completely cast away; not even for her sake could he now obey Miss Cecil; he hated even to think of her—her uninteresting face and fussy ways were always trying to him; but now, to her other enormities, she had added the great sins of cruelty and cowardice—she had been afraid of his pretty, bright, little pet, and had stood and watched the cat first torture, as cats know how, and then eat him up.

Miles felt sure that *now* even his mother would not ask him to obey Miss Cecil. She was a cruel woman, and his mother had always been so kind, so tender-hearted even to poor little spiders and flies, so loving to any creature as sweet and dear as his Jolly.

Yes, Miss Cecil was heartless, cruel, and cowardly; he would never obey her again. What severe judges children are! how little they often know of those they condemn!

While Miles was thinking these thoughts of his governess, she was kneeling in her chamber, and with tears streaming down her cheeks, was praying thus: "Lord," she said, "let me win the love of Miles. I love him so much—I love him so much. I am a very weak woman, Lord—very weak and very ignorant; teach me to do better."

This was the first true prayer Miss Cecil had ever uttered. She wanted something very much indeed; out of the depth of her longing she asked for it earnestly. This, too, was the first time she had ever admitted a flaw in her character.

Meanwhile a sudden thought had occurred to Miles. Suppose he went to his father and told him exactly how things really stood, and begged of him to remove him from Miss Cecil's care. His mother had spoken of his soon having a tutor for him. How delightful that would be! how easy for the manly boy to have to obey a man, to have nothing more to say to either Miss Cecil or his nurse!

To think with Miles was usually to act; and accordingly, that evening Mr. Harleigh was disturbed from his after-dinner nap by the sight of his little son standing by his elbow. It was long past Miles' usual hour for going to rest; but he had carried his spirit of rebellion so far as positively to refuse to obey nurse in this particular.

"I want to say something to you, father," he explained eagerly.

Mr. Harleigh threw down his paper and roused himself with a sigh of mingled pain and pleasure.

In his grief for his wife he had shrunk away from his children; he had buried himself in business cares, and for the last fortnight had been little in the nursery—the children reminded him too plainly of his dead wife. They all did, but Miles most of all; he was her special darling, and so like her, so very like! He dreaded looking into his sunny eyes or hearing his gay young voice. Now he had found his own way to him, and to his intense relief he discovered that the pleasure of seeing him again far surpassed the pain. He took him on his knee and kissed him warmly.

"What can I do for you, my boy? Have you come with a request to me?"

As he spoke he observed that the boy looked thin, and that his face was paler than it had been a fortnight ago.

"Father," said Miles, looking straight at him

with his earnest eyes, "I've come to speak to speak to you about the new clergyman—the new rector, I mean; he was to be settled here about now, I know, and I saw the men whitewashing the back of the house some days back. Don't you think, father, that he has come, and that he is almost ready to begin business by this?"

"Why, Miles," said Mr. Harleigh, surprised and much amused, "I did not know you took so much interest in sermons and cottage lectures."

Miles burst into a merry laugh.

"Fancy *me* caring for his sermons," he said. "No, but, father, what I have been thinking is this, that if he has his study carpet on, and house put a bit straight, I might run up every day and do my lessons to him."

When Miles had unfolded his plan the fun died out of his face and its expression became anxious and expectant.

Alas! his proposal found no favor in the eyes of Mr. Harleigh; he looked on Miles as a very little child, and considered his excellent and exemplary nursery governess his best and most fitting teacher.

"What are you thinking of, father?" questioned Miles after a moment or so of silence, in which he had been studying Mr. Harleigh's face with the most intense interest. "Are you saying to yourself, 'The new man at the rectory won't like a bit to have Miles coming plaguing him every day?'—are you saying that to yourself, father? But I'm sure he won't mind when I tell him I've got a big, big reason for wishing to go to him."

"No, Miles, I am not giving the new rector a thought in the matter; I am thinking what I wish to have done."

"Well, father, what *do* you wish?"

"I am afraid, Miles, I wish you to stay on with Miss Cecil for the present. She is a very good governess, and can teach a little boy like you all you want to know for a long time to come."

Mr. Harleigh said this in a tone that plainly meant to put an end to the matter, and finding when he had finished speaking that Miles did not answer him, he took up the *Times* and went on reading an article that interested him. In a few moments he glanced again at the boy; his face was turned partly away, and he saw that his eyes were full of tears.

With a sigh he threw down his paper, he could not make out what was the matter.

"How old are you, Miles?" he asked.

"I'll be eight in a fortnight," replied Miles wearily; he did not at all wish to think of his birthday without his mother.

"Well, listen to me, my child.—You must not suppose I have made no plans for you—I have. You are a very little boy at present—quite too young, and quite too little, to go away from home to be taught. You must be patient for a time, and do as well as you can all that Miss Cecil requires from you; and then in a year I mean, if all goes well, to send you to a preparatory school, and then to Eton. What do you say to that?"

Miles made no answer. The distant prospect seemed so far—the long, long year in which he must sink farther and farther from that standard of good he had promised his mother to attain to, so unending—

He got down off his father's knee, and stood gazing vacantly into the fire.

"Miles," said Mr. Harleigh suddenly, "you say you have a strong reason for your request. what is it?"

Now was Miles' opportunity. Had he then unburdened his little heart to his father, much of future sorrow and sin would have been spared him—but though he wished and longed to do this, he could not get his lips to frame his mother's name.

"I want," he said presently, "I mean—I said—I'd try to be good—and, father," a whole volume of energy returning to his tones, "I *can't* obey Miss Cecil, and so I can't be good."