

## FOR THE CHILDREN

### THE "WATER-BOOK."

By K. H.

MADGE was lonely. She came slowly up the stairs on her way to the nursery, feeling that she should have a long, miserable afternoon. Mother had gone to do necessary shopping, and there was no one at home but the nurse, and she was busy with baby brother.

As she came by her Aunt Jennie's room, she paused and peeped in. The fire was burning brightly in the open grate, and the warm coals sent out a cheer that was not to be found in the nursery. She loved her aunt's room, she liked to look at all the pretty toilet articles, gaze in the bright little silver mirror, and open her ribbon box, that always smelled of violet. She was never allowed to play here when Aunt Jennie was away.

As she stood at the door a thought came to her and told her that she could do no harm just by warming her feet at the grate. This was just the very moment when she ought to have remembered—but she did not. She went in, at first timidly, and then, as she heard no one coming, she sat down on the very edge of the little rocker.

For a long time she was content with looking about, but by and by the wonderful "water-book" seemed to be looking right at her.

She always called it the water-book because there were lovely purple streams in it flowing right past the houses, and then there were red boats with brilliant things draped over their sides, tall buildings of marble, and from the windows gardens seemed to be hanging, while everywhere was the soft, quiet water, and steps leading down to the boats. On Sunday afternoons Aunt Jennie always looked over the water-book pictures with Madge, and told her all about them. She said the city was Venice.

Madge thought it could be no harm to take the book over to the sofa and just look at it a very few minutes. She looked at her hands, and they were quite clean—and anyway, she meant to tell Aunt Jennie all about it when she came home, and she was sure she would say it was the right thing to do when she was so lonely. She hoped she would say that.

Wrong thoughts are like little plants, they grow and grow; and so it was not long before Madge had the book spread out upon the sofa, and was turning the leaves to find a certain picture that she liked so well. Just as she found it, she heard nurse calling. It would never do for her to come in Aunt Jennie's room,—she knew what would be said then,—so she reached out and took the tongs, and laid them across the book to hold it open, and ran up to the nursery. It happened that nurse had a lovely surprise for her in the way of a game and some taffy, and a good time for baby brother, too.

Madge really meant to steal away and put the book back, but she was having a good time, and then mother came home and asked her to help hide away brother's birthday present, and then it was tea-time, and so they were eating supper before she remembered. There was Aunt Jennie smiling sweetly at her, just as if, when she went upstairs, she would not find the water-book with the tongs across it!

Good thoughts are like plants, too, and as she sat there, looking at her aunt, the little seed-thought began to grow and tell her she had done wrong. It seemed to grow right up in her throat and choke her.

She felt that she could not stand it another minute. "Please forgive me!" she cried, and then she left her place and ran to Aunt Jennie and hid her face in her lap. "I want to tell all about it—and right before mama!"

And so the story came out, and Aunt Jennie forgave her on the spot. "I knew you would tell me by and by," she said.

"Why, did you know when I left the table?" asked Madge.

"Of course; I saw the book when I came in."

"And you were just as kind —" Madge could not believe in such forgiveness before the asking.

"I wanted you to tell me yourself." Madge was silent a while. "I tell you, Aunt Jennie," she said, at last, "please put away the water-book for a long time, just to punish me."

"I think that will be best," her aunt said. "Forgiveness is sweet, but the punishment makes us remember." — *The Youth's Companion.*



COME FOR A RIDE!

Come for a ride! there is room for two,  
On my prancing ponies, Black and Blue,  
The road is straight, and my whip is new,  
And the weather is fine for a ride.  
Nose to the ground and tail in the air,  
And it's out on our heads if we don't take care!

Was ever there such a dashing pair?  
When the weather is fine for a ride.  
Come for a ride—my lash will crack  
O'er my prancing ponies, Blue and Black,  
And we're off! to the garden gate and back  
For the weather is fine for a ride.  
M. H. C.

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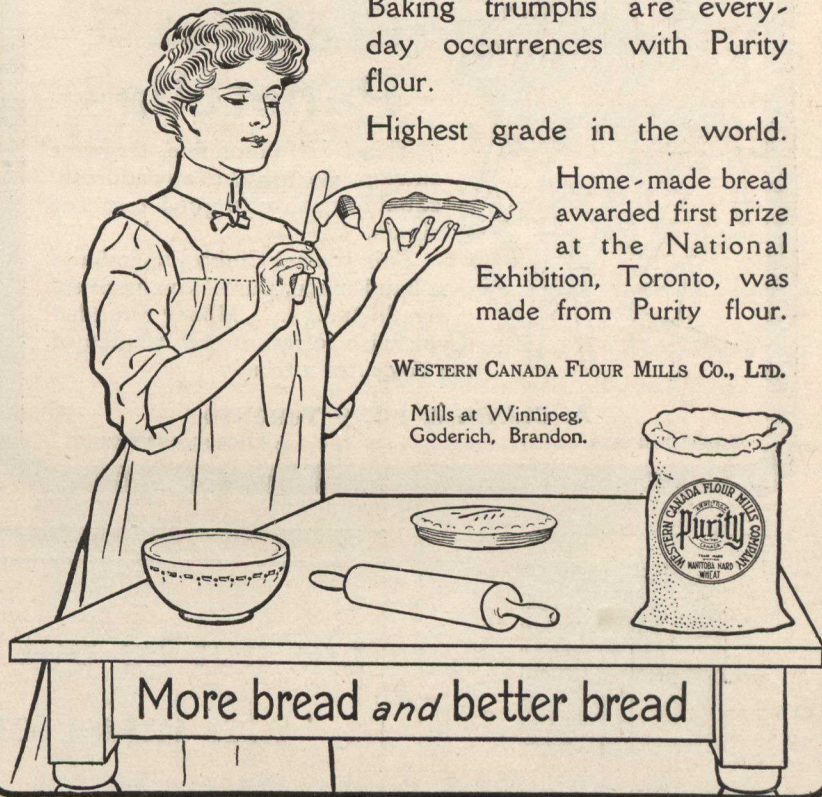
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