

else would just have taken those skates for granted. But Oscar was as shame-faced as if he was asking for a house and lot. I suppose it comes of being so poor, and having to stretch so awfully to make things look right. I wonder who the cousin is. They have very swell cousins, I have heard."

When he got home, he brought out his old skates, and took a look at them. In the light of the new ones, they certainly seemed rather shabby.

"If the cousin is one of the fashionables, I am afraid he will sniff at these. But I can't help that. Unless—"

He stopped, and turned the skates over and over in his hands, apparently examining them in all their details, and at the same time whispering softly to himself.

"I'll do it!" he said at last; "just for fun."

When he went back to the village, he stopped at the Rosses' door.

"I brought you the new skates, Oscar," he said. "I thought maybe your cousin would look down on the old pair, and I would not have their feelings hurt for anything. I have had too many good times with them." He bundled the skates into Oscar's hands, and was off before anything could be said.

The next day the cousin left, and, to everybody's surprise, took Oscar away with him, to a position in the city. Some weeks after they went, Duke met Harriet Ross on the street.

"Wait a minute," she said; "I have a message for you from Oscar." She took a letter out of her pocket, and read him the last page of it. "Tell Duke Ames," it said, "that the first Sunday morning after I got here, as none of the other fellows in the house seemed to have anything on their minds in the way of church-going, I thought I wouldn't introduce the subject. So I was settling down at home, when I had a vision of Duke's new skates. And, after that, it seemed as if there was nothing for me to do but go. Tell him that I have been as regular as the parson ever since, and that, if I ever get to be a parson myself, it will be owing a good deal to his 'providing things honour-

able' that last night on the river."
—*Our Sunday Afternoon.*

SELFISH AND LEND-A-HAND.

Little Miss Selfish and Lend-a-Hand
Went journeying up and down the land.
On Lend-a-Hand the sunshine smiled;
The wild flowers bloomed for the happy
child;
Birds greeted her from many a tree,
But Selfish said "No one loves me."

Little Miss Selfish and Lend-a-Hand
Went journeying home across the land.
Miss Selfish met with trouble and loss—
The weather was bad, the folk were cross.
Lend-a-Hand said, when the journey was
o'er,
"I never had such a good time before."
—*Home Words.*

"EXCEPT YE BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN."

Minnie and Jack Aster lived in Manitoba. Their way to school each day was three miles over the unbroken prairie. Jack was only a little fellow, seven years old, and his sister, being several years older, looked after him like a little mother.

One dreary afternoon in November the school children had not gone out to play as usual at recess, but had stayed round the stove, and had begun discussing, in childish fashion, the subject of hymn-singing. This was something they were all much interested in, as their teacher had lately introduced the practice of singing a hymn every evening before school was dismissed.

Tom Williams was the only fifth class boy in the school. He was the leader to all games, too, so his opinion was much valued by the children. Strangely enough, he seemed to hold views about the use of church music rather like what appears to be the opinions of a few members of churches and choirs in more settled parts of Canada; but of course he expressed them more bluntly.

"I think," he said "hymns are our part of the service and are intended to liven up the long prayers and long sermons, so that it doesn't matter very much what the words are. The tune is the main thing to look at."

Minnie had always looked on Tom as very wise, yet she was sure he was wrong in this, but the bell

rang just then so that nothing more was said.

When school was dismissed the teacher advised the children to hurry home as it had begun to snow and the wind was rising.

Minnie and Jack trudged through the blinding snow hand in hand. At first they felt inclined to laugh at the blustering wind.

The little girl could not forget Tom's words. He must be wrong. The world would be so much more sad if it were really true that God did not listen to the words of the hymns that his children sang.

Soon she could think of nothing but the storm for it grew more and more fierce every moment. The snow and wind seemed to strike the children like an icy sheet numbing and blinding them. Jack, although generally a brave little boy, was soon quite tired out and seemed to become heavier every second as his sister tried to drag him along. Minnie knew, too, that she had lost the trail and every step might be taking them further from the settlement.

Just when the little girl thought she could not struggle any further she almost fell against a sod wall which proved to be part of the ruins of a kind of house, called in Manitoba a dug-out with walls and roof of sods.

The children crept into the shelter of this strange dwelling and huddled together for warmth in the driest spot they could find. It was getting dark. They were wet and cold, and the snow was pouring in through the broken roof. Minnie wondered as she rubbed Jack's cold, little hands if God was still watching them, and whether He would keep them from dying of cold if no one came. Then her mind wandered back again to Tom's slighting remarks about hymns. She was sure God listened to them. Why should she not sing now? So she began singing that simple little hymn that she learnt almost as soon as she could talk:

"Jesus, tender shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb to-night,
Through the darkness be Thou near me,
Keep me safe till morning light."

As she sang she was sure God was listening. The words were very comforting to the little lost