



The Family Circle.

THE COTTAGE WINDOW PLANT.

"Mother, I turned it yesterday,
And see! it's moving round again;
The naughty thing will have its way,
And minding nothing I can say,
Peeps through the window pane.

"It will keep turning to the light,
Buds, flowers, and leaves, and all;
It has no sense I'm sure, nor sight,
Yet seems as if it reasoned quite,
Or heard its sister call.

"I want to make it bend this way,
And watch me at my book;
But if I read, or work, or play,
If I am sad, or if I'm gay,
I cannot get a look."

"My Annie dear, it seeks the source
Of heat, and life, and light;
Its motions you can never force,
No hand can turn it from its course—
Be sure it moves aright.

"It has a word for thee, my love,
Though mute, a voice Divine;
It bids thee turn to One above,
In whom we live, and breathe, and move,
Thy mother's God and thine."
—Band of Hope Review.

THE SILVER CRESCENT.

"But how came a whole village with stores and mills and houses to go to ruin at once?" asked Mary Somers, as she gazed from the hill-top into what seemed a valley of desolation that lay before her.

"There are many stories connected with this ruin," replied dear Mother Wagstaff, at whose farm-house the little party of girls now with her was passing the summer.

"When the railway came through the Centre, the shops and mills went there, too; and after a while the people and the houses followed them. The old church wasn't worth moving.

"I went to school in a building that stood on those timber posts that you see standing out of the ground, just at the left of the old church. We used to wade knee-deep through the snow to get to the school-house, and thaw our frozen hands over the old box-stove, and warm our lunches there at the noon-spell. How the wind blew up under that open foundation! But we enjoyed school for all that.

"The two head girls were Eliza Bond and Katherine Noble, daughters of the Squire who lives in the great house you saw, and of a smart, forehanded farmer. They were rivals in everything—from the head place in the class, to their dress; and as they grew older, in their attentions of the village beaux.

"A fine farm, which a city gentleman had improved and stocked and built a grand house on, and then got tired of, was to be sold at auction. The Squire and the farmer both bid for it, and the farmer succeeded in getting it. He was obliged, however, to place a small mortgage on the farm. He wanted the land.

"Eliza cried a week, and declared she would never stay in town to see Kate Noble strutting round those walks, and picking flowers in that greenhouse!

"She did stay in town, however, but she gratified her ill-feeling by remarking, within Kate's hearing, that anybody could live in a fine house till the mortgage on it came due."

"As Kate was the most amiable girl, she always had the sympathy of the other scholars when such ill-natured remarks were made.

"In those days medals were used as marks of merit, and the scholar who kept the head of her class for a week, wore one round her neck all the next week. Eliza gained this distinction oftener than any one else; but she never cared for losing it unless Kate won it.

"On one of these occasions, finding no cause for a quarrel, she had a crescent cut roughly out of tin and hung it from her

neck by a blue ribbon, and strutted about so proudly as to make every scholar laugh; and then she looked at Kate and rattled the poor imitation till the ridicule took all her pleasure away in having gained a medal.

"Their last examination day came; and the Judge, and the Governor, and three ministers, and two doctors, and some fine ladies from Boston were there—the latter in great leghorn hats and red crepe shawls. Boston folks rarely came up here then.

"The schoolhouse was trimmed with green boughs and red and yellow flannel roses, and the prizes for the four classes dangled from the festoons.

"The 'first girls' prize was a real silver crescent; and we all examined it as it hung by its blue ribbon from its green bough.

"After the head boy had received a fine magnifying glass, presented in a nice little speech, the master put up his hand for the silver crescent, when lo! it was gone!

"With great confusion he said it was to be given to Miss Kate Noble, and that it would no doubt be found; that it must have been caught off by some shawl or scarf.

"There was a great shaking of dresses and shawls, and the boys made a search among the boughs and on the floor; but in vain.

"When Kate's name was mentioned, the boys began to stamp with their well-greased cowhide boots, and the girls to clap their hands. But the master put a stop to that, saying that we must always remember that when one gained a victory, others were disappointed.

"The poor young master did not go to the judge's to dine, as he had been invited to do, with all the grandees, including the ladies from Boston. He stayed at the school-house to hunt for the crescent. He might as well have gone, however, for it was not found.

"While some of the big boys were still down on the well-sanded floor looking for it, a simple fellow, who came to school from the poor-house, stared at them with open mouth.

"Well, Dickey," said the master, playfully, "what do you know about this medal?"

"I hope it aint buried under the school-house!" cried Dickey.

"The boys laughed, and one said, 'What put that into your head, Dickey?'

"I heard a hoss kickin' outside in meetin'-time," replied Dickey, "and went out to see what ailed him. I see a tall gal, all rigged up in white, a-crawlin' out from under the school-huss, and when that ere was lost, I thought mebbe she'd been a-buried on't down there."

"Why, Dickey, a tall girl couldn't stand up under there," the master said.

"I didn't say I see her a-standin' up. I see her a-crawlin' out!" said Dickey, shrewdly.

"Oh yes, and you saw Granny Clift walking about the poor-house after she was buried," said one of the boys. "That was another of your ghosts, Dickey Crump."

"The lost crescent was a seven days' wonder, and then whooping-cough and measles came and gave folks something else to talk about.

"Eliza went off to New York to a grand school, and stayed two years. Then she came home, knowing a great many foreign tongues, and music, and embroidery, and everything that rich men's children learned then. She found Kate already married and owning the beautiful place her father had left her.

"Eliza married the old judge's son, and lived in the great house you saw under the horse-chestnuts.

"These two women had gained more sense now, and the old feud seemed to die out, although they were never intimats. But after some years the scarlet fever broke out among the children, and almost every mother was afraid to help a neighbor lest she might carry home the infection.

"In the midst of it, Kate Noble—that was—sent her boys off to her mother-in-law, and went up to Eliza's and watched night after night with her sick boys.

"Sam Drake, a poor old drunken infidel, who used to spend his whole time in bar-rooms, drinking and reviling all who were good, said at that time, 'If all Christians were like Mrs. Kate Raymond, I'd be a Christian too. But as they aint, I won't jine 'em, and they needn't ask me to!'

So matters went on till this village had been all moved off, excepting the school-house, and the others that were not worth

moving. But years after, the school-house was sold to an Irishman, for a great pig-sty, and the moving of it was the signal for the boys to congregate—as any stir of that kind always is.

"They jumped over the desks, and hunted for their fathers' and grandfathers' initials, and guessed who cut the flags and the ships on the doors and window-sills.

"Then they went under the building, which you see stood quite high from the ground behind, and kicked round among the old papers, and boxes, and tin-pail covers that, according to a careless custom, had been allowed to accumulate there in the old days.

"Finally a black boy, who always followed the others shouted, 'I've found a rale pretty piece o' tin!' And he held up the crescent, which was lost before the most of them were born."

"The other boys did not think it worth taking from him, and he carried it to the post-office, and showed it to some one there who said it was real silver; and he found an inscription on it which he made out to be, 'May 4th, 1840.'

"That, of course, set people talking, and started up the old surmises again. The boy sold it for fifty cents, and it went round the village.

"Dickey Crump, who was a life-long resident of the poor-house, got hold of it, and said, 'I knowed it was down there. I see a tall girl come out under there, a-holdin' her white gown all round her to keep it clean, and I told two big boys, and they said if I did see her, they could bet who it was, but they darn't say! That ere's long ago.'

"Who was it? some lady asked him.

"I won't tell," said Dickey. "If I did, praps I'd git 'scuded from the poor-house."

"Eliza's husband was a member of the General Court; and he'd just got home with company from Boston. They were having a grand dinner one day, when one of Eliza's boys came rushing in, and not noticing the company, cried—

"Say, mamma, are you a thief?"

"The child's ardor in defence of his mother brought a peal of laughter from the guests. Little Roy still pulled at her sleeve, and cried, 'Say, mamma, say?'

"No, my dear," Eliza said, "I am as honest as the day."

"You didn't steal a silver medal and hide it under an old rickety school-house that's a pig-pen now, did you, mamma?"

"Nonsense, Roy," said the mother, looking very pale.

"Well, I don't want any dinner. I'm going up-street to lick the boy that said that!" shouted the angry child.

"Eliza excused herself, and led the excited boy from the room. 'Now, Roy, dear,' she said, 'eat your dinner quietly with your brothers, and then go and tell that boy if he ever says that again, your papa will see to him!'

"The poor child swallowed a piece of pie almost whole, and then ran off to carry this threat to his little tormentor."

"Of course, then, she did not do it, Mrs. Wagstaff," said one of the old lady's listeners.

"She certainly did do it, my dear; and long after her husband had secured and destroyed the medal, she confessed it to Kate, who was watching with her during an alarming illness.

"She said, that by stealing a look at the teacher's mark book, she knew that Kate was the medal scholar, and to save her wounded pride she had slipped the crescent from its place and hidden it among the rubbish which was never cleared out.

"The secret would have slept safely with Kate, who was a noble woman, but the nurse, who was in the next room, heard it all, and gave wings to the story.

"Again the children at school taunted Eliza's boys, and said, 'Didn't we tell you so?'

"One day her oldest boy, a splendid fellow of twelve years, came home, half in grief and half in anger, saying, 'Mamma, we shall never be done hearing about that medal. That big Whately boy owes me a grudge. He got some tin-foil off some tobacco today, and cut a crescent out of it, and pinned it to my back.'

"I saw all the boys laughing, but I didn't know what it was about, till Dan Clay came up to me and took it off, and said it was a mean thing to do, and that he'd stand by me. I ran home without leave, and on my way met old simple Dickey

from the poor-house, and he began telling me how he saw a handsome young lady crawling from under the school-house seventeen years ago, and then this crescent was missed.

"I threw a stone at him, and told him I'd break his head if he ever said 'Crescent' in this town again. Now, mamma, I'll never enter that school-house again, and if papa tries to force me to, I'll run off to sea and never come home again. 'And the poor boy buried his face in his hands and burst into tears.

"Eliza's husband soon sold the place, and the family went West; but I'm glad to tell you that Eliza had grown a wiser and kinder woman long before the punishment of that early wrong came to her.—Youth's Companion.

AN INCIDENT OF BIRD-LIFE.

People who take an interest in stories of bird-life may remember a curious controversy as to how the cuckoo's egg gets into the nest of the small bird in which it is usually deposited.

From the position of many of the nests in which cuckoo's eggs have been found it seems pretty evident that the female cuckoo cannot have laid her egg in the nest, but the egg being laid in some other place, must have been conveyed by the bird to the nest. How, without injury or utterly destroying it, could a cuckoo carry her egg, and did she employ bill or feet? has been asked by many people.

The following occurrence which I witnessed will explain how at least one cuckoo's egg was conveyed to the nest. In the month of June, 1867, I spent a few weeks at Farnham Royal, Buckinghamshire. Sauntering along the edge of the common one bright sunny morning, I stepped aside to have a look at a stonechat's nest which I had discovered three days previously, when it contained but one egg. This nest was placed in a thick plant of heath, about ten or twelve inches from the ground, well concealed by the other, except one little open space through which the bird passed to and from her nest, and through this open space the nest and its contents were visible. On my approach the hen bird flew off the nest, and I observed that four eggs were deposited. I continued my walk a little beyond the common to a small hamlet well known among artists for its picturesque old women and donkeys, and, within an hour, again approached the spot where the stonechat's nest was. When I came in sight of it I observed two cuckoos flying about in a most peculiar manner, and one of them uttering peculiar sounds. Both of them seemed to be in a wild state of excitement, and my first impression was that they were a young bird in some nest, and that danger threatened it. One of a stoat, weasel, or prowling cat; but cautiously approaching nearer them, I found that they were being mobbed by the two little stonechats. Sometimes both cuckoos would skim rapidly close by the nest, the stonechats darting at them open-beaked, and uttering piteous cries the while; again they would fly off rapidly to the edge of a wood at a little distance, pursued by the male stonechat, the female always hovering near her nest, and occasionally alighting on a bush close to it.

Could it be possible that the cuckoo had deposited her egg in the stonechat's nest, and was this the manner in which the owners expressed their resentment at the intrusion? Taking advantage of a longer flight to the wood than had yet been made, I ran toward the nest, and saw at a glance that it contained the four stonechat eggs, and no more, and in a few moments I was ensconced among some very long heather at a short distance from the spot, but quite near enough to be able to observe all that might happen. Presently back came the cuckoos, the one which I took to be the male (on account of the slightly richer color of the plumage) "cuckooing" in a wonderful manner, uttering the note much more rapidly than is usual, and the female swooped down very closely to the nest, paused for a moment in her flight, and, being vigorously attacked by the stonechats, glided past; but I saw that her beak was partially open, as though she carried something within her gape. Evidently her object was to reach the nest, and it was truly marvellous to behold the determination and courage of the two little mites of birds in their efforts to prevent her reaching it. Very skilful, too, were the