



The Family Circle.

HOW THEY WENT TO CHURCH.

"If you would take us both to church
We'd sit so very still,
We wouldn't speak a single word,
Mamma, please say you will?"

So coaxing cried my little girls,
But then they were so small—
One was but four, the other six—
It wouldn't do at all!

So I was forced to shake my head—
"The day is warm, you know,
You couldn't keep awake, my dears,
Some other day you'll go."

"But you can sing your pretty hymns,
And Nursie by-and-by
Will read a story. Kiss me now,
My darlings, and don't cry."

In coolest corner of the pew
I listened to the text,
When something rustled in the aisle—
I started, half perplexed,

For many faces wore a smile,
And turning, lo! I spied
Those naughty, tiny little sprites
Advancing side by side!

And oh! each carried in her hand
Her parasol of blue,
Held straight and high above her head,
And both were open too!

No wonder that my neighbors smiled!
While I, with crimson face,
Caught and shut up the parasols,
Then helped them to a place.

I tried to frown upon the pair—
Each gazed with wondering eyes,
Each hugged her precious parasol,
And looked demure and wise.

—Selected.

CRABS.

BY JOSIE KEEN.

George and Louis Morton were very much interested in the study of Natural History. So, one day when their uncle, who had travelled about the world a good deal, entered their study-room, they laid hands upon him and seated him in a large easy chair.

"Now, Uncle Will," said George, "please tell us something about crabs."

"Crabs? crabs? Let me see," replied Uncle Will, rubbing his forehead as though trying to brighten up his ideas. "They are queer creatures, anyway. Tigers or even fierce wolves rarely prey upon their own kindred, though they make war upon other animals. The crab family, however are very quarrelsome among themselves. If they get provoked at some little thing they give a warning click of their nippers, and presto, the biggest one seizes a claw or leg of a smaller one and gives it such a pinch. Presently the claw cracks off like a bit of chinaware, the sufferer scrambles away as fast as he can, and the victor retires from the field to eat up his choice morsel at his leisure.

"I cannot now give you a full description of various crabs and their habits, but I will tell you something of two species, the land crab and hermit crab. The land crab has a shell of its own, and some pretty strong nippers with which it seizes its food; sometimes, too, with such a strong grasp that it loses a limb sooner than let go its hold, for they have been seen scampering off, having left a claw still holding fast upon an enemy."

"Lose a claw rather than let it go? That's plucky," exclaimed Louis.

"Yes, and the faithful claw seems to perform its duty and keep, for over a minute fastened upon the finger or whatever else it may have clutched, while the crab is making off. But it is no great matter, this losing a leg or an arm, for they soon grow again, and the animal is found as perfect as before.

"I must now tell you something else strange of a species of this little animal that inhabits holes upon the highest hills and mountains of the West Indies. They live not only in a kind of society in their retreats in the mountains, but regularly once a year they march down in a large body to the seaside. They choose the months of April and May, we are told, to begin their expedition, and then sally out by thousands from the stumps of hollow trees, from the cliffs of rocks, and from the holes

which they dig for themselves under the surface of the earth. At that time the whole ground is covered with this band of adventurers; there is no setting down one's foot without treading upon them."

"What for, Uncle Will, do they march off in such large numbers to the seaside?"

"To deposit their eggs in the sand, George. No geometrician, it is said, could send them to their destination by a more direct or shorter course. They turn neither to the right nor to the left, whatever obstacles intervene; and even if they meet with a house they will attempt to scale the walls to keep the unbroken tenor of their way. Though this is the general order of their route, they, upon some occasions, are compelled to conform to the face of the country. And if it be intersected by rivers they are then seen to wind along the course of the stream.

"The procession sets forward from the mountains with the regularity of an army under the guidance of an experienced commander. They are commonly divided into three battalions, of which the first consists of the strongest and boldest males, that, like pioneers, march forward to clear the route and face the greatest dangers. These are often obliged to halt for want of rain, and go into the most convenient encampment till the weather changes. The main part of the army is composed of females, which never leave the mountains till the spring rain is set in for some time, and then descend in regular battalion, being formed in columns of fifty paces broad and three miles deep, and so close that they almost cover the ground. Three or four days after this the rear guard follows; a straggling, undisciplined tribe, consisting of males and females, but neither so robust nor so numerous as the former.

"The night is their chief time for proceeding, but if it rains by day they do not fail to profit by the occasion, and they continue to move forward in their slow, uniform manner. When the sun shines and is hot upon the surface of the ground they then make a universal halt and wait till the cool of the evening. When they are terrified they march back in a confused, disorderly manner, holding up their nippers, with which they sometimes tear off a piece of the skin and then leave the weapon where they inflicted the wound.

"They even try to intimidate their enemies; for they often clatter their nippers together, as if it were to threaten those who come to disturb them. But though they thus strive to be formidable to men they are more so to each other, for they are possessed of one most unusual property, which is of any of them by accident are maimed in such a manner as to be incapable of proceeding, the rest falls upon and devour them on the spot, and then pursue their journey.

"It is said this species when on its seaward journey are in full vigor and fine condition; and this is the time when they are caught in great numbers for the table. Their flesh, which is of the purest whiteness, is highly esteemed, but like that of all crustaceous animals is rather difficult of digestion. Returning from the coast, they are exhausted, poor and no longer fit for use. They then retire to their burrows, where they slough or shed their shells; a short time after which operation, and while in their soft state, they are considered by epicures as most delicious, and are sought for with avidity.

"There is another species of land-crab whose ways are a little singular. Dr. Gardner in his travels in Brazil says that while he was near Rio San Francisco he amused himself by watching the operations of a small species belonging to the genus, *Galasimus*, that was either making or enlarging its burrow in the sand. Once in every two minutes or so it would come to the surface with a quantity of sand enclosed in its left claw, which, by a sudden jerk, it ejected to the distance of about six inches. It always took care to vary the direction in which it was thrown so as to prevent its accumulation in one place.

"Another species of the land-crab is thus described by a traveller. It inhabits India, and it is said: 'All the grass through the Deccan generally swarms with a small crab which burrows in the ground and runs with considerable swiftness, even when encumbered with a bundle of food as big as itself.'

"What is their food?" asked George.

"It is grass, or the green stalks of rice. And it is said to be amusing to see the crabs sitting, as it were, upright and cutting the hay with their sharp pincers and then waddling off with this sheaf to their holes, as quickly as their sidelong pace will carry them."

"Why, how strangely such little creatures must look with a pack of grass upon their backs and crawling off as they do."

"Strange, indeed, Louis. Now, boys, I'll tell you what I can about the hermit or soldier-crab. It is somewhat similar to the lobster when divested of its shell. It is usually about four inches long, has no shell behind, but is covered down to the tail with a rough skin, terminating in a point. It is, however, armed with strong, hard nippers before, like the lob-

ster; and one of them is said to be as thick as a man's thumb, and pinches most powerfully. This little animal is, as we have already said, without a shell to any part but the nippers; but what nature has denied to it, it takes care to supply by art. It takes possession of the deserted shell of some other animal and resides in it until by growing too large for its habitation it is necessary to make a change."

"Where are they to be found, Uncle Will?"

"They are mostly natives of the West India Islands. Some say they may be seen every year, like the land-crab, descending from the mountains to the seashore to deposit their eggs and to search for a new shell. Others, again, say they mostly frequent those parts of the seashore that are covered with trees and shrubs producing various wild fruits on which they subsist."

"It is quite diverting to observe these animals when changing their shells. The little soldier is seen busily parading the shore along that line of pebbles and shells that is formed by the incoming waves; dragging its old in-commodious habitation at its tail, unwilling to part with one shell, even though a troublesome appendage, until it can find a another more convenient. It is seen stopping before one shell, turning it over, and passing it by; going on to another, contemplating this for a while and then slipping out its tail from its old habitation to try on the new. This also is found to be inconvenient, and it quickly turns to its old shell again. In this manner it tries several, until at last it finds one light, roomy, and commodious. To this it adheres, though the shell is sometimes so large as to hide the body of the animal, claws and all."

"What a way to secure a new home!" laughingly said George. "But, Uncle Will, how do they manage to keep the shell-house upon their tails?"

"They attach themselves to the interior by a sort of sucker with which the tail is furnished at its extremity, and also holding on by its six false legs, which it bears in its hinder portion. It is said that it is not only after many trials, but also many combats that these soldier-crabs are equipped; for there is often a contest between two of them for some well-looking favorite shell, for which they become rivals. They both endeavor to take possession; they strike with their claws; they bite each other, until the weakest is obliged to yield by giving up the object of dispute. It is then the victor immediately takes possession and parades in his conquest three or four times backward and forward upon the strand before his envious antagonist. Now, boys, I have told you all I can for the present about crabs."

"Thanks, Uncle Will. We will not detain you any longer. But do come again soon and tell us about some other animal."—*Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

"THE BEST ROOM."

BY ERNEST GILMORE.

The "best room," was it beautiful? Indeed it was. The body Brussels on the floor looked like velvet green moss, sprinkled with apple blossoms; chairs and sofas, bright, elegant and luxurious. The great mirrors even wound about with exquisitely beautiful artificial vines—always artificial whether it was winter or summer, because natural vines would fade and die in the darkness and closeness of the "best room." The costly tables held beautifully bound volumes, the easels rare and grand pictures, the mantels treasures in bronze and silver, and yet in spite of the wealth and taste used in the decoration of this particular room, there was something lacking, something so bright and entrancing that it would have glorified every corner if it could have possibly crept in. The root of the trouble was that it could not possibly creep in, although like the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, it was willing to warm and comfort without money and without price.

Oh, the blessed sunshine! Sunshine sent by the Creator to His creatures as a blessing unutterable! and still, how many spurn this heavenly gift, even barring and bolting it out of their homes. The mistress of this "best room," with the mossy carpet, possessed another front room which was "second best," indeed, it was the family room, called sitting-room by courtesy, although it was constantly used as diningroom. There was nothing very attractive in this room as we peeped in one pleasant winter morning. The carpet was faded, and so were the curtains; everything looked dark and dingy, even the lady of the house as she sat near a window sewing. Just then a little girl of ten entered the room, a pretty, graceful child, although the blue eyes were sad and the little cheeks sorrowfully pale.

"Home already; what's the trouble, Fannie?"

"O mamma, Mamie was away, had gone into the country with her papa. I was very sorry, mamma, I did want to stay so much."

"Yes, I suppose so; I believe you like Mamie's house better than your own."

"No, no, mamma, home is where you and papa are, and I love this house most; but mamma, it seems like fairyland over to Mamie's."

"Fairyland indeed; well, Fannie, you have different ideas about fairyland than I used to have; what do you mean, child?"

"I mean" (and the child's pale face grew rosy) "it is so beautiful there: the parlor isn't shut up like ours, mamma, the door into the sitting-room is always open, and, oh, mamma, the bright sun gleams through the open shutters, making the carpet look like meadows covered with daisies."

"Yes, and a pretty looking carpet it will be in a year's time, all faded and tracked with children's feet. Now, Fannie, you can see what it is to take care of things. Ours has not a spot and it is as bright and beautiful as it was when we put it down one year ago."

"But, mamma, what good does it do us? we never go in there."

"What a queer child you are, Fannie, and old too for your years. Does it not do good to receive formal calls once in a while, yes, and when we have parties?"

"But, when do you have parties, mamma? I only remember one."

"One, yes, of course; you're only a child; you have not lived very long; one don't have parties every year."

"When will you have another, mamma dear?" and Fannie pulled her stool close to her mother. "I wish it would be soon, mamma, then I could see the apple blossoms on the carpet, for you'd have to let in a teeny bit of light, wouldn't you, mamma? And, mamma, you'd let me look at the great big books, which you were afraid I'd soil, and so you know you never let me look at them; but I'm getting big now and my hands are white; look, mamma."

"How you do run on, Fannie: We'll see when summer comes about the party; and now get your box of pictures out of the closet and look them over; they will amuse you."

Fannie obeyed, and was so quiet that at last her mother looked up from her work to see the blue eyes of her delicate little girl dim with tears.

"Not very much interested, eh, Fannie?"

"O mamma," with a burst of tears, "I've had these old pictures ever since I can remember; I never want to look at them again. O mamma, if I could only look at some of the picture-books in the 'best room,' could I, only once, mamma?"

"No, Fannie, I've answered that question before. Those books are not for common use; they are too costly for children to handle."

"But mamma, I will put my flannel shawl on the table and lay the book on that, and—"

"Hush, not another word." So Fannie, finding no sympathy, put away her pictures and ventured timidly, "Could I lie down on my bed, mamma? my head aches, and if I wrinkle up the bed, I'll fix it myself."

"Yes, certainly, lie down, child, and you will feel more like obeying when you awake, perhaps."

"O mamma, forgive me, please; I do want to obey you, indeed I do, and I'll never, no, never ask you to let me go into the 'best room' again."

Morning again, three days later; Fannie is in the 'best room' now. Would you like to see the little face now that she is not shut out from the mossy carpet, the easels and the lovely books? Well, you can look, for strange as it may seem, there are rays of light peeping through the drawn shutters, and revealing plainly Fannie's sweet face.

We cannot see the blue eyes now, for the silky brown lashes are kissing softly the pale cheeks, but we can see the pretty arched mouth, the beautiful still face, the glossy, waving hair, the fair, waxen hands, holding the scented rosebuds.

Hark, a step, Fannie's mother is coming in. We must leave, for a mother's agony is too great for our inspection, but as we leave by another door we overhear these words:

"Oh, my God, my God! can it be that my love, my darling, my own lamb, is lying cold and still in this terrible 'best room?' The little hands are still now, they cannot disarrange; the little feet are quiet, they cannot track. Oh, my God, my God, would that they could."—*Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

ANNA'S BIRTH DAY PRESENT.

"I wonder what we had better get for Anna's birth day present?" said Mr. Lester a week or two before the anniversary, which had always been celebrated with gifts of some kind.

"I hardly know what to get," said the mother. "She has so many books and dolls now, and every corner is full of her toys! I wish we could think of something to keep her out of door more. She does not care for the swing unless she has company, and she plays with her dolls and reads so much she is getting pale and thin. I am sure I do not know what to do with her."