

## An Infant's Hand.

Only an infant's tiny hand,  
Tidy white and dimpled, too;  
Yet many deeds in coming years  
The pretty wee hand may do.

Care-worn furrows it may deepen,  
On the forehead of a father;  
And crush the tender, loving heart  
Of a kind and gentle mother.

It may clutch the ruby wine cup,  
That the soul will surely blust,  
And press it to the lips so guileless  
Where a mother kissed them last.

And while the brain is wine heated,  
The once stainless little hand  
In wrath may deadly weapon raise  
Swiftly to slay the truest friend.

The wee fingers white may never  
Be with honest labour soiled,  
But may take by wealth the riches  
For which other hands have toiled.

Or, it may never do a deed  
That the pure soul will defile,  
But of those goodly works partake,  
On which holy angels smile.

It may aid the poor it may extend,  
And their empty coffers fill;  
It may guide the blind and aged,  
Till God whispers: "Peace, be still."

It may gently lift the feeble  
That have fallen in rough ways,  
And to thin lips, parched with fever,  
Cooling, crystal water raise.

It may softly smooth the pillow  
Of some suffering mortal,  
Who is far from home and loved ones,  
And passing through death's portal.

It may wipe away the death dew  
That on the cold forehead stands;  
And when the heart is stilled forever,  
Close the eyes and fold the hands.

It may gather bright, sweet flowers,  
And garland the simple stone,  
That marks the spot where some one lies,  
In a strange land, all alone.

It may plant the rose and lily,  
That they may fragrance shed  
On the lowly resting places  
Of the pale and silent dead.

It may clasp the Holy Bible  
That was in mercy given;  
And when the sad heart yearns for rest,  
Be raised in prayer to heaven.

None can tell, as the years glide by,  
What the little hand may do,  
Yet still we trust that it will prove  
Ever faithful—over true.

## Choosing a Profession.

BY FAITH IRVING.

MR. ABBOT was very anxious one of his boys should continue in his footsteps and follow the plough. Nat the eldest son, was already a sailor. Frank was a dealer in dry goods and groceries, and liked well his good run of business in the country store; and now Wilbur, the youngest son, who had been contentedly attending school, and occasionally assisting about the farm, was continually talking about choosing a profession.

Farmer Abbot, as everybody called him, was too shrewd to say an opposing word, but he kept thinking perhaps Will might conclude to become a farmer after all; and the boy's mother hoped so, too.

But Wilbur had finished his course at the High School, and completed also a year of study at the Hilltown Academy, and one morning informed his father he had concluded to be a minister, and would accordingly like to enter a theological seminary as soon as convenient.

Farmer Abbot made no objection, but said he first wanted him to pay a visit to an old friend of his, a minister living in a large city, and settled over a flourishing church.

Wilbur thought that would be very nice; of course he should be ambitious to be settled over a fine, large society in the city some day, and this would afford a grand opportunity of seeing what such a position was like. So he started right briskly, intending to make a good long visit.

In two weeks he was home again. He said he had enjoyed his visit very much, but no questions were asked in particular, though Farmer Abbot looked satisfied and sly. That evening, as he was sitting on the back-door step overlooking his broad acres, Wilbur came and sat beside him.

"Father," he said, "I believe after all I don't want to be a minister."

"Ah, my son!"  
"Why, you can't get breathing time at it," Wilbur went on a little excitedly. "For some reason Mr. Blair seemed to want me to see all he did and to go everywhere he went. Now, I always thought it must be fun sitting down in a nice study, writing sermons, but dear me! Mr. Blair never thought he was ready to write until he had about a dozen books,—commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and I don't know what not, all around him. Then he'd keep hopping up to look at still some other book in his library, and twice when writing one sermon he went out to the Public Library to hunt up something in a book he didn't own."

"Then the funerals! Five in the two weeks I was there, though he said that was rather unusual—two in his own society, and three outside, where their own pastors were away."

"One night there was a great church sociable, and I thought that would be nice. But while there I heard some one I didn't know, of course, speak very slightly of Mr. Blair, and I made up my mind that what with the hard study, the outside work and the ingratitude, I'd never do for a minister; so I've decided to be a doctor."

Farmer Abbot said he thought it a great thing to be a good doctor, but as before, a few days afterward, he informed Wilbur he wanted him to visit his uncle, a very successful practitioner in a small city not very many miles away.

Wilbur had not visited this uncle for a good many years, and was quite pleased at the prospect.

In just two weeks again from the day he started, he was home, and evidently right well pleased to be there, too.

His father was superintending some work in the garden when he arrived, and out went Will to find him. They exchanged cordial greetings, made a few rambling remarks, then the son broke forth with his usual promptness when he had anything important to say.

"Well, father, I've concluded not to be a doctor."

"Ah, my son."

"Perfect dog's life I can assure you! Uncle Frank took me the rounds, and 'twas night and day, mind you; nothing but a continual round of sick rooms. Uncle would say I was a student he was taking with him for the purpose of observation. I refused flatly to go where there was typhoid and scarlet fever, but uncle said I'd have to go when I got to be a doctor. Then 'twas so mean vaccinating little babies; and uncle had heaps of studying to do, after being a doctor thirty years and more. When I said I hated to see so much suffering, he coolly in-

formed me I hadn't seen any to speak of, and I thought if I hadn't, I never would, sure, if I could help myself, so I skipped for home, and I believe after all I'd rather be a lawyer than anything else."

So it was arranged that Wilbur should enter a certain college with a view to becoming a lawyer. But a day or two before he was to start, Farmer Abbot remarked in a matter-of-fact sort of way:

"I've had a letter from my old friend, Mr. Wyncoop, Will, and he wants you to stop on your way and pay him a visit. He is a very prominent lawyer, and has a son in college now studying to take his practice one of these days, he hopes. Of course you'll make it convenient to stop a week or so with Wyncoop; he has a delightful place and will welcome you warmly."

Will looked a little puzzled at this proposal, and somehow experienced a sudden feeling of repugnance at the thought of visiting another man whose profession he had decided to adopt as his own, but his indulgent father sitting opposite looked so kind and unconscious of having said anything in the least trying, he couldn't find it in his heart to refuse, so he only said a little faintly:

"Very well, sir, I will do as you wish me to."

The week slipped by, and when evening came, Farmer Abbot stood looking down the road as if expecting some one or something.

"Are you looking for the man with a letter from Wilbur?" asked Mrs. Abbot.

"No, ma, not exactly," said the farmer drily; "I'm looking for the lad himself."

He was always "the boy" and the "lad" to his father, although nearly out of his teens."

"Well, now, he's probably on his way to college, if not already there," said his mother.

"No he isn't, ma; he's on his way home, for here he comes," and Farmer Abbot walked rapidly towards the gate to speed the welcome home.

It was late in the evening when the farmer and his son took the old familiar seat on the back steps. Conversation lagged through sheer inability on the father's part to sustain his part almost entirely unaided. Finally Wilbur made a brief, decided, but most satisfactory observation:

"Father, I believe I shall stay right on the old farm."

"Ah, my son!"

"You can't imagine how sweet and peaceful everything seems to me here."

"I want to know!"

"Yes, perfectly beautiful after the noise and dust of the great city."

"You don't say!"

"And deliver me from the perplexities and harrowing necessities of a lawyer's life! I saw Mr. Wyncoop foreclose one mortgage that has haunted me ever since, and force another sale of private property that was enough to break one's heart. All right enough as far as he was concerned, but tough, amazing tough, for the poor families who had no escape from the rigorous clutches of the law."

"Why, Wilbur, boy, how you talk!"

"Oh, that was only a small part of what I saw to disgust me, but this calm, unexciting, profitable labour on the farm seems delicious; and others may choose as they please, but I im-

agine I was intended from the start to be a peaceful tiller of the soil.

"My son!"

Then good Farmer Abbot undid his mind, and told how he had hoped matters would terminate just as they had, although he was determined to put no obstacle in the way of his following his own inclinations, other than those arising from a slight insight into the different occupations he selected. He honestly reminded Wilbur that he had seen but a glimpse of the three callings he had leaned towards.

The ministry had its attractive as well as unfavourable side, and would, if faithfully followed, work out an exceeding great reward. And so with the doctor. His profession, when understood, was a blessed one, and often well enjoyed. Lawyers also had their seasons of satisfaction and profit; but to his mind, to coax the yielding earth, then to receive her bounteous wealth of good things, was a life indeed blessed of the Lord, and he rejoiced that one dear son had been led to resolve to take up that most calm, encouraging, and necessary occupation of following the plough. "And it admits of professional knowledge, too, my boy, I can assure you," he added enthusiastically.

## Love of Play.

So far from forbidding children to play they should be encouraged in their sports, since love of play is a most important means of education. Anything which makes them run so and fro, chasing and being chased, it intensely amusing to them, and so it develops their muscular power, alertness, quickness of eye, skill in balancing, in turning round and round, watchfulness, patience, and many other faculties. Out of the four hundred muscles of the human body a large majority are probably exercised in these violent games, while regular work only exercises a limited number; hence the love of active play is instinctive. It is a great mistake to make children sit still long except sometimes that they may learn to sit still. It is, no doubt, inconvenient to their elders, this perpetual prying activity, this insatiable curiosity, this asking of innumerable questions; but if they do not do all this how shall they learn? They have been made so for good reasons. The child does not need much for his amusements; expensive toys are usually wasted on him. Give him a bit of string to tie knots in; something to roll, to push, to set up and take down, to take apart and put together, a heap of sand, a bunch of sticks, paper to tear or to cut, water to sail his boat, sand to dig—and he is fully satisfied. How suggestive is the story of the young prince, for whom a box of costly playthings had been brought from Paris, who soon grew tired of them, and going to the window, said, "Mamma, may I go out and play in the beautiful mud?"

THERE is a mean curiosity, as of a child opening a forbidden door, or a servant prying into her master's business; and a noble curiosity, questioning, in the front of danger, the source of the great river beyond the sand, the place of the great continents beyond the sea; a nobler curiosity still, which questions of the source of the River of Life, and of the space of the Continent of Heaven, things which "the angels desire to look into."—*Ruskin*.