

Family Circle.

Wonders of the Spider.

The cultivation or neglect of the senses makes most of the difference between one man's knowledge and another's. The one sees, the other observes; one hears, the other listens. What follows may serve as an exemplification of this. I was sitting in the library of a friend, when a childish visitor there said to my friend's daughter, a bright girl of eleven years—'What are you looking at so steadily, Sara?'

'A spider.'

'A spider! Horror! Why don't you kill it? There, there it goes towards you, Mrs. Rodney.'

'The little beast!' said, or rather shrieked the lady addressed, jumping from her chair, and gathering her dress close about her; 'do ring the bell, Sara, if you don't like to kill the detestable thing, and let Patrick take it off.'

'Oh, I'll take it away myself, if you dislike it so much.'

'Dislike it! my dear child, I have a horror of spiders. I cannot forgive a servant that leaves a cobweb in my room.'

'Mrs. Rodney,' exclaimed Sara, with simple wonder at the old lady's excessive hatred of the poor little animal, 'they will not hurt you; there are some species of spiders that are venomous, but the house spider is perfectly harmless. See the poor thing now, when I touch him with my pencil, how he rolls himself up into a ball, and shams dead; and pray, just look at that beautiful web. See the circles, concentric, and the radiations from the centre. I love dearly to watch a spider constructing one of these beautiful net works—perfect geometrical forms, my father says.'

'And did you ever reflect what he weaves these lovely things for?' asked Mrs. Rodney, expressing in her face contempt for Sara's admiration.

'Oh, yes, ma'am; it is a storehouse for his provender.'

'Rather say a prison for his prey, where he devours it at leisure.'

'All animals, I believe, Mrs. Rodney, have some mode appointed by their Creator of supplying their hunger. Man kills, and men women and children eat. The poor spider does no more than the rest of us. Now, do, Mrs. Rodney, and you, Anne, come and examine this web, and I think you will feel some interest in the little spinner that made it.'

Mrs. Rodney did examine it, and confessed that it was wonderful; but little Miss Anne asked, with an air of great superiority, if Sara thought it a cleanly fashion to have these spider draperies about one's room. Sara confessed, with a sigh, that it was not, but said, at the same time, that she never saw the sweeping away of cobwebs without a pang.

'But pray, Sara, what gave you such an interest in spiders?'

'Looking at them and their work, Mrs. Rodney. My uncle was always telling me 'to keep my ears and eyes open.' He turned my attention to the observation of insects and of all domestic animals, and to the wonderful instincts their Creator had given them to sustain life. He once showed me, when I was quite a child, a spider through a microscope. Do you know that they have eight bright little eyes, without lids, and eight feet with claws at the end of them? Papa read me a charming account from Irving's life of Goldsmith, of a spider that loved good company, I suppose, as he made himself a habitation in that pleasant man's room; and pleasant and gifted as he was, he seems to have had some delightful moments in observing the spider's ways of going on. Do read it, and read it to Anne, Mrs. Rodney. I have read some very curious particulars of a spider, in a delightful book called 'La Ruche.' A lady placed a spider in a glass goblet on her mantle-piece, that she might observe its habitudes. This spider, like all others of its kind, had a taste for music. Whenever the lady played on her harp, the spider came to the end of the goblet to listen more at its ease. It is told of Pelisson, in the Bastille, that he had a spider which he called to him by music. In this same book—'La Ruche,'—there is a

pretty oriental legend cited, in answer to some one who asks, 'Of what use is a spider?' King David often asked of God, why he had made spiders, which where, as David said, of no use. God showed him that they might be useful. One day, when he was endeavouring to escape from his enemy Saul, he took refuge in a cave where he remained several hours. During this time, a spider wove his web over the opening of the cave. Some time after, David heard the King and his soldiers passing. One of them said to the King—'Sire, he is there, perhaps.' 'O,' replied the King, laughing, 'do you not see that unbroken web?' David, thus preserved, prayed God to pardon him for having supposed that any of his creatures could be useless. 'This is but a fable,' added Sara, 'but fables sometimes teach us truths. I believe that it is told in the true history of Mahomet, that he was once preserved from a pursuing enemy, in the very mode here imputed to King David.'

By this time Anne's feelings had considerably changed, and she stood in a chair to observe more closely the spider's web.

'What in the world,' she asked, 'does he spin the web of—out of nothing?'

'Oh, no, dear Anne; from a viscid secretion; threads so fine they can only be seen by the microscope, issue through a multitude of little holes, and, joined together, form but one thread. It is stated in 'La Ruche,' that these imperceptible threads issue in a shower of five thousand. A great naturalist asserts that it would require five millions of these threads to make one as coarse as a single hair of his beard. So you see dear Anne, that man, with all his art, cannot equal that poor little scared spinner, yet lying there like a lifeless ball—that odious detestable little beast.'

Both Mrs. Rodney and Anne began to feel some respect for the spider, but Anne was not yet ready to abandon the whole ground.

'You must own, Sara,' she said, 'that they are dirty creatures.'

'No, I shall allow no such charge; their web is at first white, but is soon discoloured by the dust. This annoys the spider, and he beats it off the web with his foot. Sometimes, by running over the web he sweeps the dust into little balls, and throws it out of his habitation. There is an anecdote of the maternal love of the spider, told by Bonnet, the naturalist; but you will laugh at it, Mrs. Rodney.'

'I promise you I will not.'

'Here it is, then. The eggs of a spider are contained in a sack of a pea's size, attached to its body. Bonnet, desirous to test this maternal love, threw a spider with its sack into the nest of the lion-ant, a cruel insect, which hides itself in holes in the sand. The poor mother-spider tried to escape, but could not and save its sack. She tried in vain to defend it. The rapacious insect seized it. The mother might have escaped, but chose to remain and perish with her young.'

'Dear Sara,' exclaimed Mrs. Rodney, 'you have cured me of my antipathy. You have taught me that it is far better to study God's creatures, than ignorantly to condemn them. I, by shutting my eyes and indulging a silly reasoning, have remained in ignorance; you, by keeping yours open, have acquired pleasing knowledge.'

'And as for me,' said Anne, 'I will henceforth adopt your uncle's motto, and 'keep my eyes and ears open.'

We recommend it to all our young friends likewise to adopt this wise motto. They will perceive in their every-day walks, under their own roofs, in the meanest insect that creeps over the ground, illustrations of the wondrous skill and infinite love of their Creator which will expand their minds and also raise their thoughts from the creature to the Creator, from earth to heaven.—*Am. Messenger.*

Two Oak Leaves.

Two leaves fell gently from a fresh and strong oak tree. Softly they fluttered on the wings of the wind, their brodered edges sometimes folding together, until finally they laid side by side, so closely that one would hardly notice whether

there was a division, or whether one broad, beautiful, glossy leaf, laid in the dust by the roadside.

We watched their descent, and with a feeling akin to pity beheld their brightness soiled, and their soft vestments, before so shining, covered with unsightly mould. And they brought to our remembrance—those young leaves—an incident of which we once took note, beautiful yet melancholy; glorious in its unseen consummation, mournful in its present sad reality.

Unto a young and trustful mother, were born two sweet babes. Twins seem always lovely; with the same fair round faces, and the same silken locks, with little fingers of waxen purity interlocked, as they lie together in the same cradle, or side by side are folded to the maternal breast. These possessed much more than ordinary beauty, and were worshipped by the youthful parents; bound to their hearts by strong bands that shut from sight the Christian sentiment, 'Father, thou hast but lent them to earth,' they fondly termed them all their own, and making no reservation for the Almighty, loved them with a blind and selfish love.

A little while passed, and the parent tree stood, still firmly planted, though bowed by the blast of affliction; for from the branches had fallen two young leaves. Two young souls in their freshness and purity, had gone up to the better land. Side by side, on a bed of roses, they reposed; and up between their golden locks, crept the pure, unfolding petals of white moss buds, and the bright verdure of glossy myrtle leaves. Sweet darlings, they had grown weary by the wayside; the dust would soon cover them; the whiteness of their innocent brows, upon which nothing less holy than a parent's love had been breathed, was early to wear the hues of pitiless corruption; but unlike the things of mere mortality, in the garden of Paradise, these little leaves are wafted from glory to glory, by the breath of the ten thousand harps that angels sound, striking on strings of gold.

Yesterday, as we were wending our way homeward, we saw, calmly descending in the clear atmosphere, two oak leaves. But the sere winds of Autumn had stolen their freshness; crumpled, yellow and withered they came slowly downward, as if wearied of their little life, and longing to lie together and be forgotten, mingled with the soil beneath the feet of the traveller.

Poor oak leaves; they have had their youth when dainty veins mingled with the delicate fibres on their smooth texture;—they have been refreshed with the wooing zephyrs of the bright spring time; they have dallied with the spray of the rain drop as the warm south wind broke it into pearls to scatter upon them. They have passed their prime; are old and decayed; for through their very hearts the worm has threaded his way, and left his corroded and slimy paths behind him, and they are ready for the death.

So go an aged couple to the tomb. The instance but rarely occurs, when a man and wife, who

'Have shared each others pleasures,
Have left each others woes.'

Lie down hand in hand when the march of life has ended. Yet there have been such, in which the grey haired patriarch, and the meek eyed dame, have murmured their last petition in the same breath, and in the same moment, entered the glories of their everlasting home. We thought of this when the faded leaves fell in our path, yesterday, and a silent prayer found echo in our hearts,—that if we lived to be old and decrepid, we might sail as calmly down the river of death as those blighted children of the forest were wafted to their common grave.—*Boston Olive Branch.*

An Allegory.

An Angel from the realms of light sat by the wayside as a rosy-cheeked child came playing by in pursuit of a gaudy butterfly which ever and anon lit upon some sweet flower; but as the little one put out its tiny hands to grasp the prize, the insect waited on, until the child, weary with its exertions, laid down on a shady bank and soon fell asleep.

The angel then came lightly up to where

it lay—breathed upon it, when a sweet smile stole over its features, resembling that of the angel's face.

'What see'st thou child?' said the being of light, in a sweet, harmonious voice, which sounded like dying music on the air.

'I see a great number of people all in pursuit of one thing, but none succeed in securing it, for as they approach, it recedes from them. Many fall asleep by the way and wake not.'

'These are the people of the world in pursuit of happiness, which is never obtained in this life. The sleep is death, and the end of the chase. Look again and tell me what thou see'st now.'

'Oh! what a beautiful garden! it is filled with rare flowers and ripe fruits. There are thousands of beautiful beings with wings who seem to wait themselves through the sweet scented groves without any apparent exertion; singing sweet songs, partaking of the rich fruits. A soft radiant light adorns their countenances, their conversation is like music; I can understand what they say, but their language is not like ours.—It is entrancing, and I long to join them, but there seems to be a space between us which I cannot pass although they call come to me. There is one who looks like my mother—she comes towards me—how sweetly she smiles upon me; may I not go to her?'

'Not yet, child; the bright beings which you saw in the garden are those who have passed from this life into the Celestial World. The flowers are the purity of their repose and the perfume of their good works. The fruits are the result of their labors and the happiness upon which they subsist.—Therefore, follow no more after the gilded phantom, but seek after wisdom and you shall find the true path to happiness.'

As the angel concluded, the spirit mother kissed her child; the sleeper awoke—the scenes of his beautiful dream had vanished, but though long years of earthly life were his, he never forgot the vision of Heaven.

Self-Improvement.

ENCOURAGEMENTS AND CAUTIONS, ADDRESS-ED TO YOUNG MEN.

If your hearts are set on self-improvement, let not poverty deter you from its pursuit. Linnæus, the celebrated botanist, when pursuing his studies, was so poor that he was often depending on his brother students for a meal; obliged to be content with their left-off clothes and worn-out shoes, and compelled to mend the latter for himself. If poverty, in other times, presented not an insuperable barrier to advancement, it need do it now less than ever. The facilities of the present day for gaining education, and the cheapness of books, put these invaluable blessings within the reach of multitudes, who, in similar circumstances, fifty years ago, would have felt themselves hopelessly excluded from them.

Let not hard work deter you from the pursuit—neither on account of any supposed incongruity between menial labour and the graces of literature, or the refinements of taste; nor from any impression that mental improvement cannot be gained in connection with toil so laborious as yours.—Weaving, digging ditches, and breaking stones, did not prevent others from advancing; why should any labour you have to perform prevent you?

Let not a supposed want of time prevent you from making the effort. Hardly pressed as any of you may be, you are certainly as well off in these respects, as some of the cases that have occurred. It depends not so much on the amount of time you have at your command, as on the use you make of it. The hours of some men are as valuable to them as days are to others—the minutes of some are made to produce as much that is really good, as the hours of others. Seize your minutes—prize them—make a good use of them; and you may soon leave in the rear others who have tenfold the time at their command that you have, but who, because they have so much of it, may be induced to undervalue it, and waste it.

Let not your present age deter you. Alexander Beihune was two or three and twenty when he began to attend an evening school

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