

Frightening Children.

There are few things more calculated to excite a just indignation, than an attempt on the part of young persons to frighten little children, or each other. In this way impressions are often made on the plastic mind of youth, which remain through life, and cause many an hour of anxiety and perhaps agony. In this way a species of cowardice is produced which cannot be overcome in after years—and the man who would be the first to plant a standard on a hostile fort, or to board an enemy fighting hand to hand, has been known to turn pale with affright at the idea of passing a churchyard alone in a dark night—or even entering a lonely and lofty garret, in the dark, after the family have retired. Marshal Saxe, one of the bravest men who ever commanded an army on the embattled field, would never retire to rest until he had carefully examined the closets to his chamber, and looked under his bed!

It is sometimes the case, however, that these sudden shocks of fear, when young—administered not unfrequently by the unthinking, for the joke's sake—are attended with more serious consequences. We some time since saw mention made of a child in Virginia, who was frightened to death. The circumstances which led to this melancholy catastrophe are not of unusual occurrence. The child was playing with its companions, and was told by them in sport, that a ragman was about to carry him off in his bag. Alarmed with fear, the child ran into the house, when the object of his terror, unfortunately, also coming into the house, he uttered a shriek, and instantly expired.

This is not the first or only instance of the fatal consequences of fright upon children, and even upon adults peculiarly susceptible of fear. We have given many cases of this kind in the Journal, and we think the subject needs no further illustration.

Indeed, cases are known where young persons have had their minds entirely overthrown, and been doomed to lives of helpless idiocy, by the unprincipled follies of their acquaintances, who have devised and executed some cruel plan of making sport of their fears. Such conduct has no apology. Those who are guilty of it should be held as accountable as the man who levels a deadly weapon, and destroys the life of a fellow-creature.

Terror is too often the governing principle in families, and many a young and promising mind has been weakened and depressed by the dread of some threatened danger. And yet the attempt to excite the fears of a child is not unfrequently resorted to by parents as a salutary punishment! Bugbears are created to frighten the young innocents into obedience. Such a course cannot be too severely rebuked. It is unphilosophical, and in the highest degree barbarous in its nature, often entailing wretchedness, in the shape of unnecessary fears, on the being whose courage and determination should be fortified and strengthened, instead of being sapped and destroyed by the unnatural or unthinking parent.—*Asylum Journal*.

Nursery Lessons.

"Where is Master Charles?" said mamma to nurse, as she came into the house after taking a drive. "I left him playing in the shrubbery a few minutes ago," was her reply. "Tell him mamma wants him." Nurse went away immediately in search of her charge.

Some time elapsed, and no Charley appeared. Mamma did not send for him again, as she was determined for this time to leave him to himself. Charley had a habit of waiting to finish what he was doing when his mamma sent for him, and she resolved that he should for once suffer for it.

After some time Charley opened the door, and hastily inquired, as if but then sent for, if mamma wanted him. "Not now," was the reply. The emphatic "not now" arrested the attention of the lively little boy, and he walked with measured steps towards a little table, where his mamma was sitting, looking all the time very earnestly in her face, to see if she was displeased with him. A little box lying on the table soon caught his eyes, and he immediately inquired what it was. "That is a box of soldiers," said his mamma, "that I bought for you when I was in town; but, as you did not come to me when I sent for you, I shall lock it up till I can find a little boy, who will come immediately to his mamma when she sends for him." Charley's eyes filled with tears, while, with a faltering voice, he said, "Mamma, I only wanted to roll up the cord of my kite." But the sentence was passed, and Charley knew it would not be revoked. He jumped upon his mamma's lap, and hiding his little face, said, with many sobs, "Mamma, I shall try to come immediately when you send for me again."

Have mothers anything to learn from this? Yes, truly; a solemn and humiliating lesson. How many times, when the inward teacher has called us to our closet, where a spiritual table was spread, a rich feast provided for us, have we replied, "When I have finished what I am doing?" and when that is disposed of, and another call is whispered, some new occupation is presented and that also completed. We then, perhaps, if nothing else intervenes, obey the oft-neglected call, and repair to our closets—but the feast is removed, our High Priest has left the sacred chamber, which to us might have been, as it were, the holy of holies, and we return again to our worldly cares and worldly occupations, unblest—unfed.

Oh! let the little Charley's determination be ours also. If we are the children of God, we are led by the Spirit of God, and if He calls us to the greatest of earthly privileges—even to hold communion with the King of kings and Lord of lords—shall we be slothful in obeying the invitation?

"Mamma, are you there?" said my baby, as she started from her sleep, and looked anxiously round the room. "I am, love," was the reply; and the little one laid her head calmly upon her pillow, and was soon asleep again. I have frequently observed this, and it reminded me of that beautiful text, "When I am awake I am still with thee." The watchful-growing Christian should lay himself down to sleep and awake again, feeling that the Lord sustains him, and even in the silent hours of the night, when he awakes to consciousness, he looks to see if the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, is still with him, and he then can continue to slumber, like the babe conscious of its mother's presence, calmly and confidentially.

It has sometimes been cause of surprise to me that a text, which ultimately proved most suitable to me under peculiar circumstances, has been only partially repeated to my mind, and I frequently had much searching before I could find the passage. A doubt has arisen from thence, which has nearly deprived me of the comfort it was calculated to convey—"If the Spirit of God has brought this to your mind, why is it not all quoted? Surely, the Spirit knoweth all things?"

This difficulty was removed by thoughts that arose in my mind lately while teaching my little ones. On such occasions we assist them, sometimes with a word, sometimes with a line, or more as they require it. In this way, may we not venture to say, "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." We are thus led to search the Scriptures whether those things are so, and not to expect miraculous teaching, independently of God's revealed word.—A. MORRIS.

AGRICULTURE.

On the Origin and Action of Humus.

It will be shown in the second part of this work, that all plants and vegetable structures undergo two processes of decomposition after death. One of these is named *fermentation*; the other, *putrefaction*, *decay*, or *eremacausis*.

It will likewise be shown, that decay is a slow process of combustion,—a process, therefore, in which the combustible parts of a plant unite with the oxygen of the atmosphere.

The decay of woody fibre (the principle constituent of all plants) is accompanied by a phenomenon of a peculiar kind. This substance, in contact with air or oxygen gas, converts the latter into an equal volume of carbonic acid, and its decay ceases upon the disappearance of the oxygen. If the carbonic acid is removed, and oxygen replaced, its decay recommences, that is, it again converts oxygen into carbonic acid. Woody fibre consists of carbon and the elements of water; and if we judge only from the products formed during its decomposition, and from those formed by pure charcoal, burned at a high temperature, we might conclude that the causes were the same in both: the decay of woody fibre proceeds, therefore, as if no hydrogen or oxygen entered into its composition.

A very long time is required for the completion of this process of combustion, and the presence of water is necessary for its maintenance: alkalis promote it, but acids retard it; all antiseptic substances, such as sulphureous acid, the mercurial salts, empyreumatic oils, &c., cause its complete cessation.

Woody fibre in a state of decay is the substance called *humus*. The property of woody fibre to convert surrounding oxygen gas into carbonic acid diminishes in proportion as its decay advances, and at last a certain quantity of a brown coal-looking substance