

seemed a very attractive way of doing good. They were a merry party, marching through the rustling leaves that had drifted here and there across the path, chasing the chattering, frisking squirrels, and stopping now and then under some great tree "to give a concert," as they called it, making the wood ring with their voices. After a time they came to a spot that they decided to make their dining-room—a little open space near a great tree where they could leave their lunch-baskets, and to which they could bring the nuts as they gathered them.

"Let's rest a few minutes, and then be off to the nut trees," said Dick.

"What's this?" asked Tot, picking up something that the toe of her little shoe had knocked loose from the ground. "An old rusty key!"

"Queer place for a key!" said Lou, examining it. "Wonder what it belonged to, and who lost it?"

"Somebody that wanted to open their trunk or desk or something, and looked for this everywhere," suggested Nell.

"Maybe the lock it belongs to is somewhere in the wood too," said Dick. "It may be the key to some buried box with money or treasures, for anything we know."

"Yes; folks often find such things," added Nell, eagerly—"something that robbers have buried, or people in war-time, to keep it from being stolen."

That reminded Lou of a story she had lately read, and after that Tot remembered something that Uncle George had told her about his finding some money once. Then Dick recalled an account he had read in a paper, and they all grew intensely interested in the subject, and forgot how the time was passing.

"And I suppose there is plenty hidden all around here that somebody will find," said Nell, with a vague idea that half the world might have buried its treasures in Beechland Wood, "if we only knew where to look."

"Wouldn't it be splendid to go home real rich and buy things for everybody—houses and horses and everything?" exclaimed Tot, enraptured at the thought. "We wouldn't have to sell nuts for the mission then; we would just give 'em millions."

It was a tempting picture, and from thinking of it, all they had planned in the morning grew tame and insignificant. They began to examine an old hollow stump near them, and from that they went to an oddly-shaped mound. They had talked themselves into a full belief that treasures were all around them, and why should they not find them? So a regular quest began. They wandered on, digging under the roots of old trees, wearying themselves with lifting heavy stones, trying to discover caves, forgetting nuts and squirrels, the beauty around them and their own joyous spirits, in a vain, tiresome search.

Hours had passed when weary, hungry and disappointed, they gave it up and decided to

go back to the great tree for dinner. In their excitement they had not noticed how far they had wandered, but they found it a long and toilsome way to return; and when at last they had reached the place and finished their lunch, the lengthening shadows told them it was time to go home. It was a very quiet little party that entered the house that evening. The elder ones scarcely liked to tell the day's adventures, but poor, disappointed Tot poured out the whole story.

"And so we lost our whole nice day and good time and everything, and we haven't got any nuts for the mission, either," she concluded.

"Ah, yes!" said mamma; "that is usually the way when we trample down some little duty that has been put right in our path to run after some greater good that we fancy we might do if we had the opportunity—we fail of both. It is God himself who has said, 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.'"

#### THE CORN AND THE LILIES.

SAID the Corn to the Lilies:  
"Press not near my feet,  
You are only idlers,  
Neither Corn nor Wheat.  
Does one earn a living  
Just by being sweet?"

Naught answered the Lilies,  
Neither yea nor nay,  
Only they grew sweeter  
All the livelong day.  
And at last the Teacher  
Chanced to come that way.

While His tired disciples  
Rested at His feet,  
And the proud Corn rustled,  
Bidding them to eat,  
"Children," said the Teacher,  
"The life is more than meat."

"Consider the Lilies,  
How beautiful they grow!  
Never king had such glory,  
Yet no toil they know."  
O happy were the Lilies  
That He loved them so.

—Sunday Afternoon.

#### LOVED AND BE LOVED.

EVERY morning little Joan read a chapter in the Bible to her mother. One can never learn about God too early!

One morning she read the fourth chapter of the First Epistle of John. When she came to the nineteenth verse, she read these words:

"We love Him, because He first loved us."

"Whom do we love?" asked her mother.

"Our Lord and Saviour," replied Joan.

"Who loved us first?"

"The Lord; but, mamma, what do these words mean—'He first loved us?'"

"They mean, my child, that God loves us long before we love Him. When you were born, you did not love. You were a very little child, and you did not understand. But in the meanwhile God loved you, for He gave you kind parents, a cradle to sleep in, and clothes to wear. When you grew older you were often naughty, headstrong, and disobedient; but in spite of that He loved you, for He gave you

bread and meat and health and strength, He gave you playthings and amusements; through His power you have been taught about the Lord Jesus, who came into this world to make you happy, and prepare you for Heaven. This is why God loved you first."

"Now I understand!" exclaimed Joan.

"Well, do not forget," said her mother; "and remember that in return you must also love and serve Him."

The next day Joan's little cousin Mary came to make her a visit. Mary was not a very sweet-tempered child; she wanted to have her own way in everything, she wanted whatever any one else had.

Joan had a very pretty doll, which she was very fond of, but Mary liked it also, and wanted to take it. Joan refused, because she was afraid she would break it. Mary began to sob and cry; she sat down, covered her face with her apron, and refused to play.

Then Joan went to her mother who was in another room.

"Mamma," she said, "Mary is naughty, she will not play; she does not love me."

"Do you wish her to do so?" said her mother.

"Oh yes!" answered Joan, earnestly.

"Then act with her as God does with us—love her first."

Joan was silent—she knew that her mother was right. Then, running to her cousin, she gave her the doll, saying:—

"Here, Mary, take my dolly; we will play together."

Mary thanked her with a joyous look.

Joan helped her dress and undress the doll, bending all her efforts to please her. Mary was delighted, and spent a very charming afternoon.

When she went home she said to her mother:

"Joan is a very nice little girl. I like her very much. Will you let me give her that pretty picture book I bought the other day?"

Her mother willingly gave her permission, but was much surprised that Mary should be willing to give away a thing which she valued so much.

"It appears," she said to herself, "that Joan has had a very good influence on my daughter. I never saw her so generous and good-natured."

The next day she gave her engraving to Joan.

Joan showed the pretty picture to her mother.

"Would you have thought," said she, "that Mary would ever have given me any thing like this?"

"Why, yes!" her mother answered smiling, "a blessing always comes to those who love first."

GOD gives lovingly, kindly, and freely. Suppose He stopped giving, what would become of us?