

sends messengers to bring the key called *frost*, which does for the burrs what sorrow does for the human heart, pinches it, benumbs it, and makes it ache with pain, until at last the prickly doors begin to unlock by degrees to let the ripe nuts out. Sometimes there are bad ones mixed with the good in the same burr, then we find them and learn the truth, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Burrs, too, there are that have not grown rightly, nor filled with any good fruit, these the *frost* does not open—they are left to their own way. Of course, these little *nut-houses* can be smashed open, but that is not the natural way of getting to the inside, and house-breakers generally come to grief.

The chestnut tree is a good likeness of the growth and progress of our lives and characters. It begins its yearly life in the spring and grows on step by step, until the middle of summer before it blossoms. Sometimes when out for a drive, seeing the trees look bright and green and full of leaf, but no blossoms, the query has involuntarily escaped my lips, "Are we to have no chestnuts this year?" and the answer has as often been, "Oh wait, it is not time yet for the bloom." Then my brain would moralize, how like to the growth of little people! By degrees we grow larger and learn more, and seem to promise much before we blossom, and then not all the blossoms mature into fruit. When the long finger-like blossoms are fully grown, reaching their several tips, outward revelling in the sunshine, they seem like so many little flags of hope waving in the breeze praising God, while they bear inscribed upon them, many promises to us of good gifts, to use without abusing, if we could only read them aright. After the tiny burrs appear, could we see as God sees within the little burr, we would see the germ nut. Just so within every baby is there the Divine germ of spirit, which will grow as the child advances, step by step. The Scriptures tell of the child Jesus, that as he grew in stature he grew in favor

with God and man. That is what *we* ought to do, and if we try to be good and really want to be good, God will help us and we too will grow in favor with God and man. Who does not love a good boy or girl?

Could we have a detailed account of the little boy Jesus, I think we would know of many obedient, kindly, thoughtful and wise acts, showing that he began to blossom before he was twelve years old. However, that is the age at which we find him appear in the temple, in the midst of the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions, and all were astonished at his understanding and answers. How many of us are that old, and what are we doing and thinking about? How many parents think their children at that age only fit to play with childish thing, or simply to be seen as wax dolls? I love to dwell on this story of Jesus going to the temple. It has been a tower of strength to my youthful heart, and perhaps, by bringing it to notice, others may be encouraged. These are things we do not say much about, but when the spirit prompts, let us act in obedience to the inward monitor.

Now we come to the time of the sear leaf, or the grey hair which is a crown of glory to him who hath it if he be found in the way of righteousness. The golden tints of the *chestnut* leaves invite to the fruit gathering, calling all, come see what my summer's work has been; gather freely, unselfishly, and use rightly. It is nice to have spending money all our own, to do as we please with. But let us remember by our use or disuse of it we exhibit our characters. The Scriptures counsel us to honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase, Prov. 3:9; and all the tithe or tenth part of the fruit of the tree is the Lord's. Lev. 27:30. The blessing is promised only to those who honor the Lord. Now let us examine ourselves and see whether what we mean to do with the money is simply to gain selfish pleasure; if so, it is all wrong. God is the great Searcher of hearts. We cannot deceive