

Family Circle.

COUSINING!

BY MARIE HARJEN.

I fully intended to pass my summer at Saratoga. In fact, I had already signified my intention to Henry—my husband—and given him due notice that I should need plenty of money to enable Augustus and myself to live nicely, and dress as befitting our station.

Augustus—"Gussie," we always call him—is eight years old, and the cunningest, cutest, cleverest child in the world, I do believe; I suppose I ought not to say so, but I can't help knowing it, if I am his mother. He is so quick and so funny! The other day he ran into the kitchen and got a bottle of blue, and painted all Bridget's fresh-baked pies in the funniest way. I had to laugh, though Bridget was as cross as two sticks, and Henry said he ought to be punished instead of being laughed at. The idea—punish a child for a little harmless fun! True, it was too bad to spoil six nice pies; but then, children must have some amusement.

But I started to tell you why I did not go to Saratoga. Henry must needs go and speculate in Wall street, and the result was, he got the worst of it, as greenhorns usually do; and so, having no money to pay expenses, I was obliged to give my plan up. I had pinched and managed every way, in order to get lots of pretty things for Gussie and I, and I was just determined I would not stay home all summer.

I was so disappointed I cried, my eyes nearly out, and let Henry see just how cruel and selfish he was. I must say he looked pale and worried, but I didn't pity him one bit. Once he put his arm around me, and said:

"Don't be so angry, Jennie, dear. I only meant to get plenty of money for you, so that you could enjoy yourself, without bothering your pretty little head about anything."

I didn't say a word, but just shook off his arm and walked away. This is so like a man; they will do some silly thing, and then insist upon it that if it hadn't been for you, they never should have done it.

But, as I said before, I was determined not to stay at home, and at last I hit upon the very thing to do. I would go and visit my country relatives!

Such a good chance, too, for I could tell them how much money Henry had lost, and that I should probably have to break up house-keeping. (So they wouldn't think of returning my visit; I wouldn't have one of them come to New York for anything.)

I told Henry what I had determined to do. He objected—said he didn't think it was nice to visit people whom you did not desire to receive at your own home; but I cried a little, and Henry gave in. "Very well, Jennie," he said, "have your own way; only remember, if any of these people, whom you affect to despise and yet insist upon visiting, come here to pay a visit in return, I shall expect them to be treated like honored guests, and shall make it my business to see that they are."

I did not say a word. I never do when Henry gets on his dignified air. So the matter was settled. Little Gussie was delighted; he hopped about the parlor on one leg, and finally turned a summersault over a foot-rest; in coming down, he kicked his foot right through my Japanese fire-screen, which tumbled over and threw down a beautiful *plaque* and broke it.

I took it back to Stug's next day, and told them it must have been cracked when I bought it, for it fell to pieces when no one was touching it. (I'm sure that was true!) They refused point-blank to exchange it, or even to allow me half its value. And when I told them they were the meanest store in the city, they had the *impudence* to tell me—*me*—that they were obliged to guard against *misrepresentation* and *fraud*. Did you ever? I guess it will be a long time before I go into that store again!

My first visit was to be paid to Aunt Sarah, mother's only sister; she lives just out of Philadelphia. I dressed Gussie in the loveliest suit of blue, and sent him down into the parlor, with the strict injunction not to leave it till I came down stairs. I couldn't have been over ten minutes, but the little rogue had got tired, and ran into the kitchen and helped himself to a lemon. When I came down stairs he was sitting on the piazza, drawing the funniest little dogs and birds all over his new clothes with the juice.

I was provoked enough to have boxed his ears, and doubtless should have done so; but his father seized him by one arm and shook him. That made me mad, and I said:

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, to *shake* a little boy like that! You had much better shake that stupid goose of a girl, for allowing a mere baby to have a lemon, when she knew he was all dressed—the idea!"

Just as I said this, Bridget came in from Mrs. Brown's, where I had sent her to borrow a black satin bag. Of course she heard what I said, and her Irish temper was up in a minute. Putting her arms akimbo, she said:

"It's a stupid goose I am, mum, for not baing in two places at once, is it? Indade, thin, I wish you'd try it yerself, and as fur that bye 'f ye's, St. Pater himself couldn't moind him, he's that full 'f consatful pranks! If it wasn't fur yer husband—who is a perfect gentleman—I'd not damane myself by stayin' another hour wid yer." So saying she bounced out of the room, and banged the door.

Of course I lost that train. Gussie's clothes were entirely ruined, and resembled the hieroglyphics on

the obelisk more than the clothes of a Christian child. Henry was obliged to take him out and buy him another suit; but I took the old ones along, thinking they would make quite a nice present for some one.

It was almost noon before we got to the depot, and we were hardly seated before Gussie began to tease me for something to eat. The mishap with the clothes had driven the thought of lunch quite out of my head; and in the hurry I had left the basket I had had packed with dainties standing on the hall table. What to do I did not know, but I bought the child half a dozen bananas, and myself a "Fashion Book;" and would you believe it, while I was busy looking at the "plates," Gussie ate every one of those bananas? I confess I was frightened at first; but he began immediately to ask for something more to eat, so I only had to laugh.

Some people at the far end of the car were eating their lunch from a basket; and before I knew it, dear little Gussie marched up to them, and in his frank baby way, asked for something to eat. They gave him a biscuit and the leg of a chicken, and you should have seen the little fellow devour it! When he had it all eaten, he began running up and down the aisle, giving all the passengers playful taps with the chicken bone—he did look too cunning for anything! but of course a stop had to be put to his innocent fun.

One old man had fallen asleep, and his head, which was fearfully bald, was lying on the back of his seat. Gussie, running along, hit it a little blow. Goodness! you should have seen the rage he was in; he jumped up and seized poor Gussie by the arm, tore the chicken-bone from his grasp, and threw it out the window, all the time shouting, "What do you mean, you young rascal, by trying to brain me, hey? Do you think my head was made for you to play shinny with; hey? You're a nuisance, sir—a nuisance! and you ought to be soundly thrashed, sir; that you ought! Where is your mother?"

I was so astonished at what was going on, I had not spoken a word, but at this question I recovered myself. I arose and confronted the man.

"I am his mother," I said, with a withering look, "and I am astonished that a little fellow can't stretch his legs without such a time about it. As for you—you had no business to have your old bald head hanging way out in the aisle if you didn't want it knocked." With this I turned my back upon him and led Gussie away.

The poor child was so upset that he cried at the top of his lungs for about a half hour, in spite of all I could do to comfort him. At last I bought him some candy and some pop-corn, and that quieted him.

But I really think the child must have been more frightened than I thought, for in about an hour he began to grow restless and feverish, complained of a dreadful headache, and at last was fearfully seasick.

I had a dreadful time with him, and what made it worse was the heartlessness of the passengers. The old man with the bald head rubbed the red mark Gussie had given him, and growled: "The little imp will have to keep still for a little while;" and one woman remarked to another, quite loud enough for me to hear: "Should think he would be sick—his mother has let him eat trash every minute since we started."

I think such remarks perfectly brutal; but I pretended not to hear them, though the tears sprang to my eyes in spite of myself; and one old Quaker lady seeing them, came to me and said:

"Thee must be wiser next time: the child would be better if thee forbade candy and pop-corn. But I will help thee nurse him, for he feels very badly just now. And she did, kind old soul that she was!

I never was so glad to get anywhere, I think, as I was to arrive at Aunt Sarah's. She lives in a fine old place surrounded by trees, and has an orchard as fine as any in the State, while her flowers, even in June, were lovely. I had planned to stay here one week, but as soon as I saw the place, I resolved to make it two at least, or perhaps three, for I saw at a glance what a nice place it would be for Gussie to play.

My poor boy felt much better as soon as he left the car, and by the time tea was ready, was as hungry as a wolf. I must say the tea was rather plain—only biscuit, preserved plums, canned cherries, custard, chipped beef, cake, cookies, and tea.

I am a good liver, and Gussie likes nice things too. So I asked Aunt Sarah if she couldn't give me a piece of chicken, as I felt rather hungry.

"Our spring chickens are too small," she said, "and the old ones would take too long to prepare; but I can give you a nice piece of ham."

"No, I thank you," I answered, coolly. "I never eat pork." But Gussie spoke up and said he wanted some ham.

"No, dear," I said, "mamma don't want you to eat pork; it's not nice." But he insisted so earnestly that at last I consented.

Aunt Sarah did not like it, I know, but as she offered to have it cooked for me, I am sure it was no more trouble to have it brought for Gussie.

When it came, Gussie didn't want it, he had eaten so much cake. So I gave him a second dish of preserves instead.

I think auntie must have told Uncle John about it, for next morning at breakfast, when I asked for some cream toast for Gussie, he spoke up and said:

"Jane—I hate to be called *Jane*—don't you think you ought to teach your boy to be satisfied with what food is placed before him?"

"Oh," I said, pleasantly, "Gussie is so delicate, I find it necessary to invent little dishes to tempt his appetite."

I think that is a mistake," said the old bear, "and while you are here we will try the experiment, for I never allow your aunt to be annoyed by such foolish and unnecessary things. Let him eat

the good, wholesome food the rest have. He will be all the better for it."

I bit my lip, but said nothing, for I was determined to stay my visit out.

Aunt Sarah was real good, and looked so much like mother I couldn't help liking her; but once in a while she would say something too provoking for anything, such as:

"Jennie, you are spoiling that child of yours even worse than your mother spoiled you, and that is unnecessary;" or, "Gussie would be quite a nice boy if you would only make him mind, or showed the least bit of judgment about him." And once she said: "I declare, I believe Gussie is growing almost as selfish as you are, Jennie."

Not very pleasant: still I should have got along pretty well if it had not been for Uncle John. He had no patience with Gussie at all. Just because he let the pig out, and the obstinate creature marched through the cucumber vines and over the strawberry bed, he scolded him like anything. And when he chased the Alderney calf down hill and she fell and broke her neck, he was grumpy for three days, and told Gussie he had rather given fifty dollars than had that calf injured, and he had a mind to give him a sound whipping to teach him to obey.

It was but two days after he began to get over his rage, when poor little Gussie got into fresh trouble.

One morning he crept down out of his chair while we were at breakfast, and pinned Uncle John's coat-tails fast to the table cloth; then he ran out into the garden, and came rushing in, screaming "Fire!" Uncle John jumped up and started for the door, and of course the table cloth was jerked off, and all the dishes thrown down and smashed! Gussie was more frightened than any one else. A hay-stack really was a fire, and in his excitement he had forgotten all about the coat-tail that he had made fast to the table-cloth.

Aunt Sarah fairly danced with fright and dismay, and Uncle John was so angry that he took my poor boy over his knee, and spanked him right before my eyes!

"There," he said, setting him down awfully hard, "young man, if you play any more pranks around here, I'll flog you till you won't know yourself from a bowl of jelly!" and he pranced up and down the room with the table-cloth dragging behind him.

What a fuss over a few old dishes, and a spot or two on the carpet! I really could endure no more; so I packed my trunk, and commanded Uncle John to have the double wagon sent to the door at once. I had the satisfaction of knowing I put him to some inconvenience, for I had heard him say he intended driving to H. on important business that very afternoon.

I presume he thought he had gone too far, for he had the horses at the door long before I was ready, and told me that no sacrifice was too great for him to make in order that I might not lose that train.

Aunt Sarah parted with me quite coolly, and did not even ask me to come again, though she could not let me go without one of her ugly remarks. "That boy of yours is enough to pester a hen in consumption," was her final sa'ute—a remark I did not deign to notice.

Consumption, indeed! Well, her hens are too old to fear that disease.

My next visit was to cousin Hannah. She lives on a farm, and is not very well off; has to work pretty hard, for she has a big family of children, one a little baby.

My Gussie did enjoy himself there, though we couldn't stay very long, for he did keep me in trouble all the time. Hannah's children are nice little things enough, but terribly stupid. Hannah is very religious, and has taught all her small fry to tell the truth on all occasions; the result is, they never do anything naughty but they march in and make a confession to their mother.

My Gus was forever getting them into some scrape, and they were forever sitting on the stool of repentance in consequence—it was ridiculous. One day he got Johnnie who is only six years old, and the stupidest of the lot—to play he had been captured by the Indians, and tied to a tree. Just as he got him safely tied, Gussie saw Dick going fishing, and he forgot all about Johnnie and went with Dick.

Toward night a thunder-shower came up, and then Gussie recollected that Johnnie was out in the orchard tied up, but he was so scared that he didn't dare tell anybody; but just as soon as it stopped raining, he ran and untied him. Of course, Johnnie had been frightened, and had called and screamed till he was so hoarse he couldn't speak; but for all that, I did not see any reason for crying over him as Hannah did, and keeping him in bed for two weeks, even if he did have a cold and cough. I was sorry for him, but no one seemed to consider my boy, and how wet he got his feet going out in the wet grass to untie Johnnie. I had to take his supper up to him with my own hands. I put him right to bed—I was so afraid of croup. Every one was so taken up with Johnnie, who has lived in the country, and accustomed to get wet often.

I told Hannah I was sorry, and really thought Gussie had been to blame; but I did not see the sense in petting any child as she did Johnnie, for it would spoil him as sure as she continued to do it. Hannah and Tom were both a little cool for a day or two; but after a little the affair was forgotten till Gussie got into another scrape!

One rainy morning the children were all in the dining-room playing, and Mary—the oldest girl—was told to watch the baby; but Mary was very fond of reading, and finding one of my magazines, she settled herself in a big chair, and forgot all about the baby, who was playing on the floor.

Gussie is too cute for anything, and as soon as he saw the baby sitting there, he thought of some fun. He came up to my room and got the bottle of "Stratena," a book of pictures, and the scissors; and what