

Then she slaps us, and we get crosser—Ben is right down saucy sometimes.”

“And Kitty—,” said Mrs. Benson, with a smile.

Kitty hung her head, and blushed.

Fanny, who had been frowning to show that she was thinking deeply, now remarked that she could not remember any flower likely to grow in smoke, and not mind fog.

“Then it’s no use for me to sow anything,” sighed the would-be gardener.

“I tell you what, my dear,” said Mrs. Benson, “I know something that thrives wherever it is planted, and always brightens up a place—I think, Kitty, you must take to sowing sunbeams.”

Sunbeams! did ever anybody hear the like! Fanny’s ready laughter broke forth at once. Sowing seeds was a familiar operation, but sowing sunbeams! She did not see how this was to be managed at all. Besides, supposing if a sunbeam could be sown, what would come of it?

Here Kitty unexpectedly supplied the answer.

“Why, sunshine!” said she, looking where it kissed the roses into sweetness, and shone over the meadows, and thinking how good a thing it was.

“There is another kind of sunshine,” said Mrs. Benson. “Some folks seem to take it about with them, go where they will; and it’s wonderful what happiness they make, just by being always ready to do a kindness, or say a cheerful word—these are the sunbeams to sow, children, if you want a crop of sunshine.”

This conversation made a deep impression on Kitty. The next day she went home, laden with treasures—apples for the children, a bottle of milk, some home-made sausages for father and mother—and over and above these good things, she carried away with her a determination to sow sunbeams.

But it was not quite such easy work as she expected. Bad habits have such a tiresome knack of sticking, when first you try to shake them off; they are as bad as the prickly burr one picks up in a country lane.

Kitty had grown so accustomed to give sharp answers when her mother scolded, or the young ones teased, that they slipped out before she was aware; and then, instead of sunshine, there came stormy weather. She made another grand mistake, too. When she did control her temper, or did what she could for any one, she expected to be immediately rewarded by some pleasant result—to see her mother grow less

hasty, her father more affectionate, her brothers and sisters more—yes, more admiring and grateful; for I am afraid that Kitty began her sunbeam sowing with a vague notion that she would thereby become something of a heroine in her small circle. Instead of this, the children worried as much as ever; father never seemed to notice her efforts at all; and mother actually once took her well-meant cheerfulness for impudence. “Don’t give me any of your impudence!” said she, when poor Kitty (who had yet to learn that zeal must be tempered with discretion) met her angry reproaches with a smiling answer. And Kitty retired, heart-broken; and took the first opportunity to tell her Sunday-school teacher of her perplexity. “Indeed,” she concluded, sobbing, “I have tried to sow sunbeams, but they won’t grow—it is too smoky even for them, I suppose.”

“Oh! no,” said Miss Markham, “you needn’t fear that, Kitty; the fact is you are in too great a hurry. Even a mushroom takes a night to come up, and here are you not willing to give your seeds of sunshine so long as that? To be sure, stray sunbeams do sometimes spring up very quickly,” she added, smiling down into Kitty’s already comforted face, “but, as a rule, we must be prepared to go on sowing for a great while before we see any good come of it. Your friend, Fanny, did not expect to gather her sweet peas or to eat her radishes directly she had sown the seed, I suppose?”

“No,” admitted Kitty, “she had to wait for weeks.”

“Well, Kitty, you may have to wait months—even years—before you get a full harvest; but if you keep on sowing, it will be sure to come some day. And you must remember, dear, we do not sow for our own gratification only, but because we love God, and want to do what pleases Him.”

Kitty nodded. She went home rather soberly; but with a mind made up to persevere.

And persevere she did, until by degrees it became more natural to be helpful, cheery, and sympathetic than anything else. Then she began to sow sunbeams unconsciously, and, indeed, to forget her old notion on the subject. But I think Miss Markham often remembered it when she saw the tall, bright girl in her place at the Sunday-class, or called on Mrs. Baker, and found her with time for a restful chat, because her eldest daughter was growing so handy and so industrious.

A long time went by—eight whole

years. The Baker family still lived in Broom Court, and one dull November evening there were grand doings about tea-time. The lighted lamps showed a wonderful spread—a big plum cake, a plate of periwinkles, another of shrimps; these delicacies being added to the usual fare of bread and butter in honor of Kitty’s sixteenth birthday, and her first start in life; for Kitty was going to service, Miss Markham having procured for her a place where she would be well trained. The Bakers, big and little, felt that her fortune was as good as made; but Mrs. Baker expressed the prevailing sentiment when she declared that the house would not seem the same without Kitty.

“That it won’t! There isn’t nobody like our Kit!” vociferated Ben.

Ben was now a strapping youth employed in the foundry close by; and he had long ago profited by his sister’s example, and given up being “right down saucy.”

The younger branches said nothing—conversation would do when plum cake was not about; and a practical proof of their affection was before Kitty that very moment in the smart shell work-box purchased by many weeks’ self-denial in toffee; but father took up the tale.

“She’s a good lass,” said he. “I thought to-night, comin’ in from the fog—it’s as thick as thick, and the smoke beats down dreadful—thinks I, well, if our home is not but a poor place, it’s always got somethin’ lightsome in it when Kit’s about.”

This being a long speech for Mr. Baker, who was a man of few words, he refreshed himself with a good draught of tea and set down his saucer approvingly.

How pleased Kitty felt, although tears twinkled in her eyes. Suddenly her thoughts flew back to the day when she—a little fretful child, looking wistfully at the flowers in a country garden—had wondered whether any fair thing could grow in her dingy London home. Ah! the scattered sunbeams had thriven after all; and in the dear, happy faces around Kitty beheld her crop of sunshine.

There is a verse in the Bible which Kitty was learning to understand. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith.” This is sunshine indeed.—*Sydney Grey, in The Sunday at Home.*

ONE brick placed upon another helps to make a building; one kind deed done after another helps to build a beautiful character for a boy or a girl.