

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

ELSIE MARLEY AND HER PIGS.

"Elsie Marley is grown so fine,
She won't get up to serve in swine,
But lies in bed till eight or nine,
And surely she does take her time."

(Mother Goose.)

Now, dear little people, I happen to know more about Elsie Marley and her pigs than Mother Goose does—a little pig told me all about it! Elsie's mamma and papa lived on a little farm in the country, and such a snug little cottage. They had two children—Elsie and her baby brother, just two years old. One day in June before daybreak air, and Mrs. Marley were moving about the house, preparing to go to town, four or five miles away. Mr. Marley was to take vegetables, fruit, chickens and eggs to sell, and his wife wanted to get some muslin and calico and see her aunt, who lived in the town. The baby was to go too, but Elsie was to be left at home as there was not room for her in the spring wagon, and then some one must feed the chickens and pigs.

Just before she left Mrs. Marley gave Elsie, who was sound asleep, a good shaking, and told her she must get up right away, and must be sure and feed the pigs and chickens and tidy up the house. "Oh, yes, ma'am," said Elsie brightly, but after her mother left and all was quiet, she could not resist another nice little nap—"just for a few minutes," she told herself sleepily. But we all know what that means! The hours passed, and still lazy Elsie slept and dreamed the time away! The sun stared in at the window and tried his best to wake her, but in vain!

In the meantime the pigs were getting hungrier and hungrier: "Squeak, squeak!" said one little pig; "I'm starved to death nearly. Why don't someone bring me something to eat?" "You nearly starved to death! You are always thinking of yourself," grunted a mamma pig crossly. "How do you suppose I feel?"

"It is too bad we must depend upon lazy little girls to give us our breakfast," said the wise papa pig, "they do not know what it is to be hungry." "Ugh, ugh," snorted an impatient and very fat little pig, "I can't wait any longer. I feel that I'm growing thinner every minute." Gradually the pigs gathered closer together and held a consultation—and this is what they decided to do.

Elsie's bedroom was on the ground floor, and they determined to try and waken her themselves. The whole herd ran across the barn-yard—frightening the ducks and chickens out of their feathers, who though hungry were naturally more patient and less greedy than the pigs—straight on to Elsie's window, where they gave her such a serenade! You never heard a louder one, I'm sure! Still Elsie slept like the seven sleepers!

The impatient little pig could stand it no longer! He darted around to the back door. Now, as luck would have it, Mrs. Marley had left this door open, and the baby had run back to kiss Elsie "good-by," and left all the others open. When the little pig found this out he squealed triumphantly to the others.

In a second they were around him. In the house they went, grunting and squealing, running against chairs, upsetting buckets, until they burst into Elsie's room itself. Here was fun, for Elsie was a very careless little girl and left her things on the floor and everywhere. One pig chewed her hair-ribbon, another picked up her doll in his mouth getting her fine clothes all wet, and frightening her terribly. They scattered her clothes, all the time making such a commotion that at last Elsie awoke.

She thought at first it must be a dream when she sat up in bed, and was very much frightened. When she realized that it was really true, she soon scrambled out of bed and drove them out. Then she hurried to dress, ate her breakfast, and gave the pigs, ducks and chickens theirs. But it was so late now, and so hot, that she decided to wait until late in the afternoon to tidy the house—and what do you think? Her mamma and papa came home before she had made the beds or dusted and swept!

Just think how ashamed she must have been! Do you think she ever slept so late again? The little pig that told me about it did not know.—D. R. C.

THE SISTER MONTHS.

(By Lucy Larcom, in *St. Nicholas*.)

When April steps aside for May,
Like diamonds all the rain drops glisten;
Fresh violets open every day,
To some new bird each hour we listen.

The children with the streamlets sing,
When April stops at last her weeping;
And every happy growing thing
Laughs like a babe just roused from sleeping.

Yet April waters, year by year,
For laggard May, her thirsty flowers;
And May, in gold of sunbeams clear,
Pays April for her allvery showers.

All flowers of spring are not May's own;
The crocus can not often kiss her;
The snowdrop, ere she comes, has flown;
The earliest violets always miss her.

Nor does May claim the whole of spring;
She leaves to April blossoms tender,
That closely to the warm turf cling,
Or swing from tree-boughs, high and slender.

And May-flowers bloom before May comes
To cheer a little April's sadness;
The peach-bud glows, the wild bee hums
And wind-flowers wave in graceful gladness.

They are two sisters, side by side,
Sharing the changes of the weather,
Playing at pretty seek and hide—
So far apart, so close together!

April and May one moment meet
But farewell sighs their greetings smother;
And breezes tell, and birds repeat
How May and April love each other.

YOUNG RATS NURSED BY A CAT.

A few years ago, when visiting a neighbour's house, it was mentioned in the course of conversation, that there was then on the premises a singular case of a cat having adopted children from a nest of one of her natural victims. On my expressing a wish to witness this phenomenon, I was at once taken to the stable yard, and there shown a fine female cat nursing a family composed of two kittens and two handsome young rats, the whole four living in perfect harmony. On my enquiring the history of this remarkable group, I was informed by the coachman in charge, that shortly after the cat-mother had given birth to a litter of

kittens, she had been deprived by him of all but three. The mother evidently did not approve of this reduction in her family, became restless for a time, and, on her again settling down, it was discovered she had replaced one of her murdered children by a fine young rat. Seeing this, and knowing that rats were too numerous to please the game-keeper, the coachman determined to destroy one of the three remaining kittens, which was done. On the following morning the coachman, on visiting the cat's nursery, was not a little surprised to discover that the mother, in lieu of her murdered offspring, had introduced into her nursery a second young rat. The two kittens, in company with the two rats, had been impartially nursed, and were, when I saw them, living in perfect harmony. They were at that time about two months old, and were residing together in an old wine-case, with a piece of wire netting thrown over the top. The young rats were pretty looking, sleek creatures, with brown eyes, and evidently well nourished. They were, however, of different dispositions, for while one would with confidence return the visitor's gaze, the other disliked being looked at by strangers, and would, on the approach of the latter, make frantic endeavours to conceal itself amongst the fur of its foster-mother.

"THE WORK OF OUR HANDS."

"The work of our hands establish Thou it." I read the words over again, going back a little. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and the work of our hands establish Thou it."

"The work of my hands day by day," I said almost scornfully, as I thought of the homely work my hands had to do, the cooking, the house-work, the patching, the mending, the rough, hard work I sometimes had to put them to. And I smiled as I thought of such work being established forever. I smiled again almost bitterly as I thought, "It is established that my hands must work, if not forever, for all my earthly time."

"Please comb my hair now, mamma; the first bell is ringing," and Neddie tapped my hand with his comb.

I patted and smoothed my boy's tangled locks. "The work of my hands," I said, and perhaps more gently than usual turned up my boy's face to kiss his lips as he went to school. I turned to the sitting-room, drew up the shades in the bay-window, so that my few geraniums might have all the sun's rays they could, shook down the coal in the stove, dusted the chairs, straightened out the table-cover and books, and brushed the shreds from the carpet, sighing a little over the thin places that the best arrangement of mats could not quite cover. The rooms looked neat and tidy. "The work of my hands," I repeated, mechanically. Just then the sun shone out bright. It lit up my room like a kind smile. "The beauty of the Lord our God," I repeated softly.

I went to my homely work in the kitchen. Patiently I tried to go through my every-day routine of duty. For I said to myself, "If this is always to be the work of my hands, surely I must let the beauty of my Lord rest upon it."