

its lasso in quite a different manner, but it may be equally unfailling.

When examined, each lasso cell, or little sack, is found to contain a long, slender thread, coiled within it, somewhat like a lasso, and floating in a fluid. The cell is filled so full of the fluid that it bursts with the slightest touch, and as the fluid squirts out, it carries with it the slender lasso, armed with sharp stings. In this way lassoes are darted out to capture many little crabs or fish that brush too near in passing. The sting of the lasso seems to paralyze the unfortunate creatures, and they make no effort to escape as the tentacles coil round them and carry them to the mouth of the greedy jelly-fish. Jelly-fish vary greatly in size. Some are mere dots, so extremely small that we should not notice them in the water, while one species is said to be seven feet in diameter, with tentacles measuring fifty feet.

The size of jelly-fish is greatly enlarged by the water they absorb; indeed, the substance of which they are composed consists largely of water. A specimen weighing several pounds when alive, will shrink away to almost nothing if exposed to the sun and the wind. As the body contains no bones or other solid matter, it all perishes together, and no trace is left of its former beautiful shape. You will see that jelly-fish are in no way like real fish. One writer found them so much like a familiar vegetable, that he called them "mushrooms of the sea."

It would be impossible to describe to you the varied colours of jelly-fish, as they include almost every hue, the beautiful tints being probably due to their transparency. Some are purely white, and as clear as glass; while all shades are to be found, from pale blue and pink to bright red and yellow. Those found in tropical seas are of a deeper colour than ours.

In striking contrast with these brilliant jelly-fish is one species which is so delicate and transparent, that as it floats upon the water we can scarcely see the substance of which it is composed.

Although jelly-fish are so brilliant in the daytime, they have a different beauty at night, when they throw out a golden light, slightly tinged with green, resembling the light of a glow-worm. Vast numbers of small animals in the sea have this power of throwing out light from their bodies. The light is called phosphorescence. As it may be seen at any time of the year, illuminating all oceans, it is an unfailling source of delight to voyagers. It is most conspicuous on a dark night, when the water is agitated by the motion of a boat, or by the breaking waves, because the disturbance of the water excites the little animals.

A pail of sea-water, carried into a dark room, often affords a good opportunity for studying this interesting phenomenon. Although we may not have detected the presence of any animals before, as soon as the water is stirred or jostled we will see the beautiful sparkles of light. The phosphorescence of some animals is of a bluish tint; in others it is red, like flame.

A person will rarely tire of watching a boat as its prow turns up a furrow of liquid fire, and each dip of the oar sends a miniature flash of lightning through the otherwise dark water. It fills us with wonder to think of the countless millions of little creatures required to produce these marvellous

effects all over the ocean, and wherever the restless waves break in lines of light, either upon tropical shores or ice-bound rocks.

Crabbe, the English poet, has given us the description of a phosphorescent sea:

"And now your view upon the ocean turn,
And there the splendour of the waves discern;
Cast but a stone, or strike them with an oar,
And you shall flames within the deep explore,
Or scoop the stream phosphoric as you stand,
And the cold flames shall flash along your hand.
When, lost in wonder, you shall walk and gaze
On weeds that sparkle, and on waves that blaze."

The Dear Little Heads in the Pew.

In the morn of the holy Sabbath,
I like in the church to see
The dear little children clustered
Worshipping there with me.
I am sure that the gentle pastor,
Whose words are like summer dew,
Is cheered as he gazes over
The dear little heads in the pew.

Faces earnest and thoughtful,
Innocent, grave and sweet,
They look in the congregation
Like lilies among the wheat;
And I think that the tender Master,
Whose mercies are ever new,
Has a special benediction
For dear little heads in the pew.

Clear in the hymns resounding
To the organ's swelling chord,
Mingle the fresh young voices,
Eager to praise the Lord.
And I trust that the rising anthem,
Has a meaning deep and true,
The thought and the music blended,
For the dear little heads in the pew.

When they hear "The Lord is my Shepherd,"
Or "Suffer the babes to come,"
They are glad that the loving Jesus
Has given the lambs a home,
A place of their own with his people,
He cares for me and for you,
But close in His arms He gathers
The dear little heads in the pew.

So I love in the great assembly
On the Sabbath morn to see
The dear little children clustered
And worshipping there with me;
For I know that my precious Saviour,
Whose mercies are ever new,
Has a special benediction
For the dear little heads in the pew.

—Margaret E. Sangster.

The First Toad of the Season.

BY UNCLE JOHN.

"A TOAD," says some little boy, "What a disgusting object! I hate a toad, and often stamp on them when they come in my way, or crush them with stones." I, too, must confess, I believe, that I sometimes did the same when a thoughtless, hard-hearted child; but I have deeply repented of it since I came under the kindly religion of Jesus. My repentance, however, could not restore to existence the poor, unoffending victims of my wanton cruelty. The next best thing I can do is to dissuade every child from ever doing what I did.

And that I may properly do for many good and sufficient reasons. Toads, although they are not pretty, are perfectly harmless. They have no venom or poison about them; nor do they destroy anything that is valuable to man or beast. On the contrary, they are very useful to farmers and gardeners, by devouring the grubs and flies which eat the leaves and stalks of valuable plants. It is very interesting

to watch their operations in this respect, and a little boy might find worse amusement than to put food of this kind within their reach. He would find that, though they seem so slow and awkward in their movements, they can be very nimble when they need to.

Knowing all this, is it any wonder that I should feel no repugnance to a toad, but rather a kindly feeling towards this grave and useful scavenger of our gardens. This class of animals (I don't like to call them reptiles) love shade and moisture. Everyone will have remarked how they cower down in the grass, or under the large leaves of other plants, out of reach of the fierce rays of a summer's sun; and how they come hopping out when the sun runs low and the shadows lengthen towards evening, or when the sky becomes cloudy, preparatory to rain, in the day-time. They always come forward to welcome a shower. When the weather becomes chilly in the fall, they begin to hide away in the ground, which they much resemble in colour, into which they seem to find means of settling down, or burrowing, deeper and deeper during the season of frost and snow, during which time they hibernate, as it is called. They seem to be unconscious of either pleasure or pain during a period which to us, if we are well-to-do, is pleasurable, but if we are destitute of food and fuel (that is to say, poor), is very painful. But when the genial spring sun thaws the ground and attempers the air, they begin to show themselves once more. In this respect their restoration to activity becomes a symbol and harbinger of the resurrection. Thus it is, if my parable of the rescued sparrow was a fitting Good Friday meditation, my reflections upon the toad may not inappropriately follow on the heels of Easter-time.

"The first toad of the season." Though the first robin, or wren, or thrush of spring might be more practical and pleasing, "the first toad of the season" is not less suggestive. I felt this appearance of an old friend to be so. I had felt the winter to be very severe and very, very long. I have several domestic creatures to look after very early every morning, the care for which often drags me reluctantly from a warm bed, albeit, it gives me a view of the glorious spectacle of the rising sun, and, in the summer time, the exquisite enjoyment of "incense-breathing morn." But in the winter time the mornings are very cold and sharp; and this last winter has been so severe and so long, that four or five weeks ago I began to sigh for spring. And when the first of March came, and then April, at every out-sally in the morning I looked about anxiously for some indications of spring. These have begun somewhat charily to show themselves for some days past. But nothing has given me so much pleasure as I found on going to the back door this morning of the fifteenth of April (a date at which once or twice in my life, if I recollect rightly, I saw the wild plum-trees in blossom), I found upon the platform a good sizable toad, not so warty as some, of a livelier hue than usual, and with eyes like brilliants, — a redeeming feature this in nearly all toads. The presence of his toadship gave me a pleasurable feeling, akin to that of meeting an old friend. I felt like saying, "Hail, harbinger of spring!" For I thought, if a creature

so sensitive to frosty air can turn out in the fresh morning atmosphere, warm weather must now be upon us. Come, then, and welcome, thou humble retainer of the Flowery Goddess! Come, and be our companion through the successive stages of another period of soiling, growth, maturity, and harvest!

The toad is said to possess considerable intelligence and great attachment to human persons. I have heard of several little boys who made pets of a toad, very much to the reciprocal attachment and pleasure of each.

All my young friends have heard of the Duke of Wellington—first a great general, and then a great statesman. Well, he was not above ministering to the wants of a toad. In one of his walks abroad, he found a little boy crying in the fields, and kindly asked him the cause. The child, it seems, had a pet toad, which he always came at a certain time of day to feed; but now he had to leave home for a considerable time, and he was weeping at the prospect, for he was unable to make any arrangement for toad's being fed during his absence, and he was afraid he might starve, or, perhaps, wander away in search of food, and he would see him no more. The great man kindly comforted the child by pledging himself to see that his toad was fed till his return; a promise he is said to have faithfully kept. All good men keep their promises.

If some of my little readers were to take each a toad under his care, and watch his habits in the garden from year to year (and they are very long-lived), he might observe some things very curious to record. At least, I hope that all children will learn to be considerate of all God's inferior creatures, all of which are endowed with a certain degree of mind, and with a capability for pleasure and pain. No more at this time about toads or anything else.

Maggie's Sixpence.

A MISSIONARY told us the other day a very affecting little incident. He had been preaching a mission sermon in Scotland, and telling of the condition of the poor women of India, and he observed that many of his audience seemed quite affected by his account. A few days afterwards the pastor of the church where he had preached met on the street one of his parishioners, a poor old woman, half blind, who earned a precarious livelihood by going on errands, or any other little work of that kind that came in her way. She went up to him, and with a bright smile put a sixpence into his hand, telling him that was to go for the mission work in India. Her minister, knowing how very poor she was, said, "No, no, Maggie; this is too much for you to give; you cannot afford this." She told him that she had just been on an errand for a very kind gentleman, and instead of the few coppers she generally received he had given her three pennies and a silver sixpence, and said she, "The silver and the gold is the Lord's, and the coppers will do for poor Maggie." How many lessons do God's poor teach us! "Poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom!"

No obstacle can close the kingdom of heaven against him who desires to enter it.—Fenslon.