

The Family.

THE BLIND SPINNER

LIKE a blind spinner in the sun I tread my days I know that all the threads will run Appointed ways I know each day will bring its task, And, being blind, no more I ask I do not know the use or name Of that I spin: I only know that some one came And laid within My hand the thread, and said, "Since you Are blind, but one thing you can do"

THEY SAY.

VIRGIL likens rumour to a bird of evil omen, which at first crawls upon the ground, then mounts up into the air, soon flies to the top of the highest steeple, and at last circles through the heavens. Let a criminal or disgraceful thing occur, and it is telegraphed far and wide, whereas the greatest and best deeds are not thought worthy of notice. A case of assault or horse stealing will be sent over the land by the associated press, but should one give a hundred thousand to lift the debt of the Foreign Board, it will probably go no further than the religious papers. And we fear the Sunday papers are stimulating the appetite for sensation and gossip. According to the Mail and Express, out of 922 columns in the New York Sunday papers on a recent Sunday, including such sheets as the Herald, Times, Tribune, World and Sun, 59 were criminal; 293 sport, gossip and sensation; 569 foreign, political, literary, etc.; and one and one-half religious, and the week previous only three quarters of a column could be ranked as religious, giving religion about one chance in a thousand. It is from such a basis of news as this, false estimates of the evil in the world arise, and pessimists find their food, and long for the good old times. It will be allowed that current rumours in society are exaggerated and untrustworthy, if not baseless. Where there is smoke there is a fire; but the fire may be, and generally is, a legitimate one, and there is no occasion for ringing the bells and calling out the fire department. "They say" is not sufficient authority for believing or circulating a report. The writer has come to discount all reports about sickness unless he has them from the attending physicians, and sometimes he must discount those of physicians. In dealing with rumours, the following rules may be of value: 1. Hold in suspense all rumours, especially evil ones, until traced to their origin, or proved by sufficient evidence. 2. Don't spread a rumour unless you know it to be true, and not then unless by so doing some good will be accomplished, or at least no harm will be done. Some one has suggested that a rumour be put through three sieves: First, is it true, second, is it kind, and third, will it do any good to tell it? 3. Spread good news far and wide, as you would the sunshine. 4. Always believe the best, and discount all evil reports. Don't be a pessimist or a croaker. 5. Don't run after rumours, and especially in times of excitement, or you may find time for little else. 6. Don't worry about personal rumours, the truth will be known in time, and character counts in the long run. In order to this, however, one must cultivate a judicial mind. The methods of the courts are, on the whole, not only just but Christian. Justice holds the balances in an even hand, herself blindfolded. When one must combine in himself the functions of both judge and jury, he must hear with an unprejudiced mind. No one is allowed to sit on a jury who has previously formed an opinion in the case, or has any prejudice in the matter, nor must he be a particular friend of either party. No man can be hanged without a fair trial, and it is supposed to be innocent until proved guilty, and is to have the benefit of every doubt. There are two sides to most questions, and one should hear both sides of a rumour before giving it credence. One is apt to minimize what he does not want to be true, and to magnify the report which pleases him.

The secret of the great power of Abraham Lincoln lay in this, that he took in both sides and stated them fairly. Besides these things, all the facts must be ascertained before a correct judgment can be rendered. One may be impartial, yet not have in all the evidence, and he should also discern between testimony and evidence. The court will not allow any testimony not at first hand. Hearsay and opinion and inference count for nothing. And strong assertion, loud talking, profane expletives, wagers, and boasting are not proofs. A bag of wind will be as large as a bushel, but it will not weigh much. The judicial method of investigation and reasoning and decision is essential to fairness and may well be applied to the affairs of every day life. Now add to these a Christian charity, and one is well prepared to listen to what "they say." There is always a bright side to a man or a story which may be seen by seeking or waiting. That spirit which beareth all things, endureth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, will deal kindly in judgment. And when obliged to believe evil tidings will not rejoice over them, but will try to counteract or cure the evil.

OUR CHAMOUNIX PANSY.

THE doctor said that we must take Ethel away—Ethel, our home body, our cricket on the hearth, our little brown wren, as we loved best to call her, although her pet names were myriad. "Where shall we go?" was the question we asked each other, her father and I, his spinster sister, aged fifty. The wind roared up the chimney and whiffled the curling flames in the wide open fire-place as he dashed on his courses through the wintry sky and shouted back, "Far away, far away!" as we looked at each other and listened. "Far away it shall be," said my brother, emphatically. "To Europe?" I asked. "To Europe!" Then he sat still a long time and thought, and I, too, fell into one of those reveries which come easily to single women whose chief riches are hearts at leisure from themselves. Ethel had been my baby, my own darling baby in all senses but one, from the day she was born; and yet, that one sacred sense being wanting—the sense of real motherhood to real daughterhood—I never felt like deciding any important step in her destiny, even when I believed most strongly in my own practical common sense. Surely I had been told often enough of this faculty to have an overweening belief in its infallibility, for, as far back as my memory could go, there came the echoes from that unending refrain. "But she is a woman of excellent common sense!" Was common sense my beginning and ending? I sometimes asked myself a little wearily. This February night, however, with the mercury at zero, the snow driving like frozen sleet against the windows, and Brother Fred and I sitting in the library deciding Ethel's fate, I was never more glad in my life to be a woman of excellent common sense if I had to go abroad with the dear child. "When shall we go, Frederick?" I asked, rising, and dipping a wax candle into the gas to light my way up stairs, for the servants had gone to bed by my orders, and the hall lamp was extinguished. "Soon. Perhaps next month." "Good-night," I said. "Good-night, Eliza." Dear, dear! how the wind did howl around the great empty house as I slowly climbed the winding staircase to the second storey and glided into Ethel's room which communicated with my own. How pure she looked! Round and soft and fair as Alpine edelweiss and yet radiant as an ascension lily, with the golden splendour of its heart shed upon her bonny head; for her hair glowed like sunshine under the rays from my candle. "O, Ethel, Ethel," I murmured. And, despite my common sense, I felt the tears gathering and falling, and a chill, pre-cient foreboding grasping my heart like the hand of death. "What was the matter?" you ask. "Had Ethel done something wrong? Was she ill? Had she suffered a great sorrow?" Look at her. See the pale waves of pink flush her rounded cheeks as her breast rises and falls with her regular breathing. See that long flaxen fringe edging the lids reposing over her sweet blue eyes in two perfect scallops with the healthy firmness of incarnate ivory. She is well. Look at that gentle smile faintly relaxing the curve of her fine, sensitive lips, and that indefinite expression of sweetness and soul whiteness which the face mirrors in sleep. Ethel is good. Look at the infantile smoothness and fullness of her brow and its sunny absence of care. Ethel is happy. What is the matter? Somewhere in that perfectly moulded head, somewhere back of those bonny eyes, somewhere pressing upon her brain was a disease. The doctor said that her mind was slightly, very slightly, clouded. Her faculties all acted, but in a strange, fantastic, intermittent way. Long before we would have been

willing to confess this to ourselves the doctor had forced the truth home to us by calling our attention to a broken hinge. Then we knew. Afterward we talked it all over freely, and fortified ourselves with the hope of one chance in a hundred that he gave us that Ethel would recover. Strange—as it seemed to us—that an hereditary taint already remote, not having appeared in three generations, should have stricken this one solitary blossom of the fourth and made our hearts to bleed so sorely with present and anticipated loss! We took our motherless darling away. The journey over the ocean revived her animation wonderfully. She seemed just herself when we landed. Dear Ethel! All through the spring and early summer there was constant, if slow, improvement and it was with gladder hearts than we had carried for a year that we left Geneva to show our dear girl the wonders of the Chamounix, with Mont Blanc, The Needles, and La Flegère guarding its deep emerald valley and glacial streams. The evening of our arrival was perfect. The next day was made memorable by an excursion to the Mer de Glace and a return by the Mauvis Pas. Ethel was the strongest and gayest of the party, full of innocent frolic and witicism. We verily believed that the cloud that the doctor had spoken of had finally and forever lifted, and would float away never to return—as harmlessly as the fleecy doves' breasts of cloudlets sailing over Mont Blanc toward the sunny plains of Northern Italy. We were all tired the next day, and we rested in our delightful rooms of the Hotel du Mont Blanc, or read in the flickering sunshine warming the coolness of our lofty altitude while sitting on a bench under the trembling leaves of the white birch. Late in the afternoon the deep blue of the sky was intensified by masses of inky clouds floating up the gigantic sides of the Red Needles—Aiguilles Rouges. They told us at the hotel that the clouds would not return, and so Ethel and I wandered up the gentle slope back of the hotel that joined the narrow valley to the mountains. We paused on our way to read the inscriptions in the little cemetery close at hand, and which, with a small limestone church and monastery, made a conventional pile in the near foreground. We came suddenly upon two or three acres of wild pansies, the whole surface of the ground fairly aglow with the delicate blossoms; diminutive, and fragile in the extreme, but having their golden and purple tints toward the threatening mountains. "How beautiful!" Ethel exclaimed, and forth plucking their beauty and exclaiming in delight when ever she found one of her favourites—so like herself, I thought—these blonde ones with just a dash of gold, and as fearless in their chaste beauty as their saucy, royal purple sisters. "Auntie," said Ethel, lifting her eyes to the vast deep vault above, the distance awful in the clear atmosphere and emphasized by the stupendous mountains shutting us in on every side, "Auntie, I know what is the matter with me, and, knowing it, I cannot be your childish Ethel any more. I think the cloud will never pass away, auntie, dear, and before it altogether envelopes me I wish God would take me home. I am not afraid to die. Mother is with God. Let us sit down a minute," she said, and she drew me beside her among the pansies. We talked a long time about insanity, how it might be and often was averted. I told my darling that it was her affliction, and a heavy one, but that every heart bore a burden. "I know it, I know it," she said, sadly and meekly, "but I wish God would take me home. We seem near heaven here; do we not, auntie? I feel, too, just as if my mother were with us here. She smiled half-sadly, half-hopefully, with the thought. "Perhaps He will! Perhaps He will!" she said, as she rose to her feet and again looked up into the sky. I looked too, suddenly impressed with the solemn shadow brooding over the sky. Just then I saw Brother Fred in the distance, running toward us and beckoning. And just then, too, a blast swept down from La Flegère like the icy breath of death, and a flash of vivid lightning cut in twain the pall above us. "Quick, darling!" I said gently, so as not to frighten Ethel. "Quick! The storm is coming." But she stood still, as if fascinated with the weird splendour of the tempest, and, looking at me pathetically, as her fearless gaze swept the mountains, she whispered. "If He only would!" My heart trembled. Across my memory floated the words, "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Uttered or unexpressed." I wondered if it could be possible that God would hear Ethel and thus take her absolutely away from the fear of mental death. Another peal rattled and trembled among the mountains like the heaviest artillery. Another and then another. At last my sweet girl gave me her hand and we hurried forward and had nearly reached Fred, when a flash that lighted the most secret vault of the

heavens smote my dazzled vision and I fell, half unconscious to the ground. It seemed but an instant before I recovered my consciousness, and in that instant Fred had reached us and Ethel had had her wish fulfilled. There she lay among the flowers—the fairest of them all; the storm fleeing as quickly as it had burst upon us, while, through a rift in the retreating black clouds, a ray of golden light falling on her shining hair illuminated also a countenance as smiling as radiant as if it had seen a vision of celestial glory. I felt as if my darling had gone home in a chariot of fire. It is years since then, but there are pansies on my table still—for Ethel. We laid her near the spot of her translation—in the cemetery under the shadow of the sombre mountains—and on a little wooden cross, after the fashion of quaint Chamounix, we inscribed her name and age. But on a marble slab sunk into the grassy mound we carved a pansy broken from its stem. Since Ethel's death I have not heard so much about my common sense. Perhaps it is because, as if it were her uncompleted work, I have devoted myself to going about trying to do good to the darlings of the poor and desolate, while saying softly to myself when I have found more than usual distress and grief, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." —Mary Harriott Norris, in Our Youth.

THE OLD CAPTAIN.

It was the best fun we ever had, and if you knew us three boys you'd know that means a good deal. This was a year ago. We'd got sort of low spirited that day, I remember, just because there didn't seem to be anything left for us to do. Generally there isn't much that we aren't up to; but that day we felt as if all our ideas had given out, perhaps because my father'd made us all go down and apologize to old Mrs. Dennis for tying her cat up in green ribbons to celebrate St. Patrick's day. She'd scolded pretty hard, and we'd tried to be polite, and on the way home we sat down on the bridge to rest. "I wish we could think of something jolly to take the taste of that call away," Charley said. He was kicking the boards of the bridge, I remember, and how he was scowling! "Folks talk about ill-natured tricks," Fred went on, in an injured kind of way. "If there were any tricks they wouldn't call ill-natured, I guess we'd be willing enough to do 'em. It's the folks, it isn't our fault! What do they want to take everything the wrong way for?" "I don't see what's the good of being a boy if you can't ever astonish people a little!" said Charley and then we all kicked our heels for awhile and looked gloomy; at least the other two did and I felt so. And it was just then that the old Captain went by, leaning on his stick, and we all looked after him. We didn't speak to him. We never tried to tease the old Captain. They said he'd been in the Mexican war, and had fought the Indians and everything, and they said the old cloak and military hat he used to wear had belonged to his father, and that he was in the Revolutionary war itself, and the old Captain had always kept them and begun to use them now, he'd got so poor. He'd have been in the poor-house if he hadn't been an old soldier. He had a little bit of a pension, I think, but it wasn't much, and he'd had some debts he was bound to pay up, and father said it was a miracle how he got along. He never wanted to talk much. I guess it used to make him feel lonesome because the people in our place weren't his own folks. And nobody could manage to help him, and he lived out there beyond every other house, and when he first came to the village people used to talk about him a good deal, and tried to make him feel at home; but it wasn't much use, he was so kind of sad, and now they'd got used to him. We all felt sober when he went by. "Looks sort of peaked, don't he?" I said and we all leaned out to watch him. "He's going after his supper," Fred said. "My, I should think he'd be dreadful lonely going back there, away from every one. It's cold, too, and his fire'll all be out and he'll have to cook his own supper. He's real kind of trembly in his walk. I think it's too bad for a captain!" "Well, folks would be better to him if he'd let them, said Charley, kicking harder than ever, "I'm sure I wouldn't mind giving him a lift if he wasn't so glum." And then all of a sudden a thought popped into my head, and I almost tumbled off the bridge, laughing. "Look here," said I, slapping my knee, "let's cut over there while he's gone and get into his old shanty and fix his fire and have supper all ready, and make him think there's a surprise party when he comes home. It'll be more fun! And if father calls that ill-natured—My! won't the old fellow stare!" They caught hold of the idea in a minute. I declare I thought we'd go off, we laughed so. We stopped to buy a couple of slices of bacon at the butcher's, and then we tore away across the commons. We'd have plenty of time, the old Captain walked so slow. We kept chucking all the way thinking how sort of scared he'd be when he saw the

shanty lighted. It was locked, but we got the window open and tumbled in. How we did fly round! One of us kept looking out of the window and all of us scrambled as hard as boys could, blowing the fire and putting on fresh wood till the little place was all bright with the firelight; setting out the table with a plate, and cutting some bread off a loaf in the cupboard; frying the bacon, and laughing all the time fit to kill ourselves it was such a joke. I found an old broom, and swept up as clean as I could while the others did the cooking. It made it rather dusty, but I wiped things off with my handkerchief. We set a lighted candle in the middle of the table and it looked quite cosy. Then when the kettle was boiling and the bacon on the back of the stove keeping hot, and the room all warm and comfortable, we tumbled out of the window again, just as the Captain came in sight, walking slow and tired, and all wrapped up in his old cloak. We went creeping along behind the low bushes a good way so that we could see him as he passed. He hadn't looked ahead at all. He just came on looking down at the road, and we could hear him talking to himself. He often talked to himself, but we never heard what he said before. We felt a little queer when we heard it this time. It was something like praying, only not quite. "When he putteth forth His sheep, He goeth before them," said the poor old Captain, all in the dark. "Lord, you've put me forth from home and friends and work, and it's dark and cold, and I'm getting tired in this world's hard ways, but you're going before, and some day we'll come out in the green pastures. I'll follow on! I'll follow on!" says he. We boys just looked at each other. We forgot all about the fun. We felt a little frightened. It seemed too bad about the old Captain. If he had looked up just then and seen the light and stopped short with just the look we'd known he'd have, I don't know what we would have done. We just huggled ourselves to see him! And we followed him to the house and peeped carefully, while he went in. You couldn't see where anybody'd got in at all, only it was all light and pleasant and warm, and a hot supper ready, and he was so bewildered that we had to run away, to laugh out loud. But somehow we couldn't help remembering what we'd heard him say. "He's awful good," said Charley, under his breath. "There was a Bible open on the table," said Fred. "It seemed as if he were talking to some one right close by," said I. "It seemed solemner than church. Say, boys, seems to me we might do it again. Maybe he'd be more comfortable. Besides, it would be lots of fun to have it for a secret and keep on surprising him and never let him know. Maybe he'd think it was an angel!" And we stopped in the road and were every one of us late to supper planning. Well, we had it so. We kept it up all the spring and part of summer, and we planned and planned about the next winter. Spring was late last year. There was snow in April and we got up early and shovelled the old Captain out before he was awake. And we'd watch our chances and keep his fire going. We'd take over two or three sticks of wood from home, so that his woodpile wouldn't give out. Sometimes we left a bunch of flowers, and we clubbed together to buy nice things for him to eat. Once we made some oyster soup. You wouldn't think we could, but we did. I made Ann show me how at home, when we were going to have it for our supper. Nobody ever guessed. We got up a badge and wore it, and we had "grips" about it. They didn't mean anything, but they made the other boys about wild. It was the greatest sport, keeping every one in the dark. And the old Captain really seemed to enter into the fun after a little. He'd laugh when he found the things. Once he wrote a note and left it on the table: "Thanks to my unknown friends." We wrote a note back, in printing letters. It said "You're welcome!" and Charley wanted to put, "None but the brave deserve the fair;" but Fred said he liked the Bible so much we ought to find a verse there, and we did. It was: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." That was the best we could find about soldiers, and that wasn't soldiers exactly. But we thought he'd like it. The end of it? Yes, there was no ending. The old Captain was taken sick. You wouldn't believe how bad we felt about it. Our fathers and mothers couldn't see why we cared so much. They didn't know, you see. My father's a deacon, and he was there when the old Captain died. We three had walked over the commons with him and waited outside. We almost wished the Captain knew. We would have liked to shake hands with him, somehow. The cat came out, and we took her up and petted her while we were waiting. Fred said, "I was going to buy a plant to set in his window;" and Charley said, "I wish we'd had time to think up more things." By-and-by father came out with the minister, and we walked home. The Captain was gone, and people were in the house looking after things. We walked along, listening.

"He was a good man," the minister said. "He told me God had been good to him, and raised up friends and comfort for his last days. I asked who they were, for I thought no one had ever much to do with him; but he only smiled and shook his head, and said, 'God knows!' Just before he died, boys, he began to look before him as if he were straining his eyes to see, and he muttered, 'He goeth before them!' and a little later he tried to stand up and felt for his stick. 'I'll follow on! I'll follow on!' he said. It was just afterward that he fell back. It seemed as if he had followed some one up out of our sight." We didn't say anything. I kept thinking about what the Captain said that dark night, and I was glad he'd got into the green pastures he talked about. I suppose heaven was what he meant.—Selected.

The Children's Corner.

WHAT LITTLE THINGS WILL DO.

A crumb will feed a little bird, A thought prevent an angry word, A seed being forth full many a flower, A drop of rain foretell a shower. A little cloud the sun will hide, A dwarf may prove a giant's guide, A narrow plank a safe bridge form, A smile some cheerless spirit warm. A step begins the journey long, A weak head oft outwits the strong, A gull defies the angry sea, A word will set a captive free. A hornet goads the mighty beast A cry of "fire" breaks up a feast, A glass shows wonders in the skies, A little child confounds the wise. A straw the wild wind's course reveals, A kind act oft an old grudge heals, A beacon light saves many a life, A slight will often kindle strife. A puff of smoke betrays the flame, A pen stroke 'en will blight a name, A little hand may aim a blow, A message shall bring joy or woe. A widow's mite a great gift proved, A mother's prayer has heaven moved, "Then let us not," the poet sings, "Despise the gospel of small things." —The Lamp.

MISS CLOUD AND MISS SUNNYBUN.

My window overlooks a yard where two little girls play almost every day. I call one Miss Cloud, and the other Miss Sunnybun. The first makes a great friend of a pout that twists her small red lips round so. The other's persistent companion is a smile that gives to her sweet lips a scarlet curve like this. Can you guess how they look? The other day they trudged off into the woods and pastures for wild flowers, bringing back bunches of blue violets, star-eyed daisies, buttercups, and dandelion blossoms—all green and gold looking—and delicate plume ferns which had already begun to wilt. They were a very tired but happy little couple, with muddy shoes, scratched hands, and soiled aprons. Sunnybun gave some of her treasures to mamma, some to her sister, and some to me. Miss Cloud said she had worked too hard to give hers away, and wanted them all herself. By-and-by, after eating her supper, she forgot them, and the next morning there they were on the window sill quite limp and dead. Sunnybun had been put into water, and were now tossing their heads as gaily as if in their own native beds. "Let's play pony," said Miss Cloud. "You may drive," said Miss Sunnybun. "All right!" and away they went in fine style. One of the lines breaks. Miss Cloud stamps her foot. "We never play anything without something happens." "I can fix it in a minute," says Sunnybun, cheerfully. "The yard isn't large enough to play in." "O, yes; it will do very well," I heard Sunnybun answer, who knew they were not allowed outside the gate. "You ain't a good pony, and I won't play, any way!" and Miss Cloud goes into the house with such a scowl. Sunnybun runs around by herself, and looks like a sunbeam chasing a sunbeam. I wanted to surprise my little girls, one afternoon. When they came home from school, under the apple-tree in the yard they saw a table spread with a white cloth. There were tiny cream biscuits, a small glass jar of honey, rice-cakes split open and jelly spread between, cocoa-nut cakes, apple turnovers, and for a crowning ornament, a tall glass dish of nuts and candy, right in the centre. Such screams of delight, such shouts of joy, and such a scampering after wax dolls and china tea sets. After it was all done I heard Miss Cloud ask: "Don't you hope she will give us another?" "O, I don't think about another," said Sunnybun. "I think about this; isn't it splendid?" and her radiant face smiled over with happiness. These girls are both my pets, but I do wish that little unpleasant pout would go away and stay from Miss Cloud's face—for which do you think I like best? Which do you?—Watchman.