

GENEROSITY.

I was born with a tender heart, and the sight of pain or suffering always distressed me. So I was very uneasy if I saw or heard of any poor, unhappy person. I would try to give something to relieve the distress. With animals it was the same. So when our brother brought us a little fish, it, naturally, being out of water, began to gasp and droop. Maggie and myself, mindful of our dear mamma's care of us, made a nice little bed for the fish, and tried to force some milk into its mouth. So have I heard of kind ladies who would remove poor sick people from their homes and put them into a hospital. To be sure, the patient was well cared for, but he missed the atmosphere of his poor home and its home companionship, and this longing was worse for him than his disease. Our little fish died—we had made a mistake in our generous deed.

We were walking along merrily one afternoon. Maggie and I, and pleasing ourselves with eating an orange. It is not well-bred to eat in the street, but a friend had met us and given us each an orange which we attacked immediately. I had soon made away with mine, but Maggie was always more gentle and dainty than myself, so she was taking her time.

Suddenly we came upon a poor, forlorn little girl, who moved our compassion. I was very sorry that my fruit was gone, but I snatched Maggie's, and saying, "You don't want any more of that, do you?" I gave the half-eaten orange to the poor child. Such a look as Maggie gave me, but she was too good to cry, and I suppose she thought it right to give it up. This might have been an act of mercy, but it was very unjust. We must never be generous with other people's things.

A short time since Mabel was taken to the seaside, and she amused herself very much. When the party were ready to return home they went to the Curiosity Shop to buy something for the family at home. Mabel had a little money and said: "Oh, I will not buy for myself, but something for Baby Helen," and she got a small toy. "How kind and good that is, Mabel, so generous to forget yourself," said Aunt Doris. "Now you must choose something as a reward." Mabel smiled and soon made choice of a costly toy. "I knew I should get something better," whispered she to her Cousin Joanna. "I always do." Was Mabel generous?

Shall I ever forget that morning after the holidays when two of my dear little pupils marched up to my desk with flushed cheeks and beaming eyes, exclaiming, "Merry Christmas, dear Miss Katharine! Happy New Year!" And they laid before me a folded paper, saying, "We looked over all our Christmas presents for the most beautiful thing we could find, and we brought you this." I opened the paper and found a little sugar lamb! My eyes fill even now and my heart beats more quickly as I think of that offering—their very best. Oh, how long have I kept it on my shelf, until it had melted all out of shape and size, and how the fragrance of the deed still breathes over my memory. Dear Anna and Rosy, where are you now?

"Whom did you have at your Christmas party?" asked I of the dear little Bartleys. "We had the two friends from next door, and the boy over the way, and the clergyman's little girl, and the butcher's two boys. Nan said that the butcher had always been kind to us, so very kind, and that it was not ladylike to be proud and ungrateful, and so we wrote a note to them, and we had such a nice party."

Nan is the colored nurse of the family, who has followed through life the changeful fortunes of her mistress, nursing the children and the children's children, and is now teaching the little ones the lessons of true nobility and generosity.

"Yes," continued Adele, "and we gave the butcher's boys the prettiest things off the tree, after papa and mamma, because their people don't make Christmas trees."—*Christian Intelligencer.*

READING ALOUD.

If you ask eight people out of ten now, they will tell you that they hate being read to. And why? Because from their childhood they have been unused to it, or used only to such a monotonous drone as robbed even the "Arabian Nights" of half their charm. The husband, at the end of a hard day's work, returns home to pass the evening absorbed in his book, or dozing over the fire, while the wife takes up her novel, or knits in silence. If he read to her, or if he could tolerate her reading to him, there would be community of thought, interchange of ideas, and such discussion as the fusion of two minds into any common channel cannot fail to produce. And it is often the same when the circle is wider. I have known a large family pass the hours between dinner and bedtime, each one with

his book or work, afraid to speak above his breath because "it would disturb papa." Is this cheerful or wise, or conducive to that close union in a household which is a bond of strength through life, which the world can neither give nor take away? I can not blame them, for they all read abominably; and it is enough to have endured the infliction of family prayers, gasped and mumbled by the head of the family, to feel that listening to such a delivery for any length of time would exasperate one beyond endurance.

But it was not always so. In the last century—even as late as fifty years ago—reading aloud was regarded as an accomplishment worth the cultivation of those (especially those who lived in the country) with pretensions to taste, and it was, consequently, far more frequently found enlivening

the domestic circle. There were fewer books, fewer means of locomotion, fewer pleasures of winter nights, outside the four walls of the country parlor. The games of cribbage, or the sonata on the spinnet, did not occupy the entire evening after six o'clock dinner; and Shakespeare and Milton were more familiar to the young generation of those days than they are now—mainly, I feel persuaded, because they were accustomed to hear them read aloud. The ear, habituated to listen, is often a more safe conduit to the memory in youth than the inattentive eye which rapidly skims a page.—*Nineteenth Century.*

MOTHER WISER THAN DOCTOR.

A boy fell from one of the high beams of a barn, and was carried to his mother sally crushed and broken. A skilful surgeon was called. He came, looked the boy over, and only gave him a soothing dose.

"You are doing nothing to cure him," said the mother. "Why don't you set his bones?"

"It would be useless, madam. Your son has received fatal injury; we will not add to his sufferings by useless treatment of his fractures."

"Fatal!" cried the mother indignantly; "to what purpose then is your skill? Set every bone in his body."

The surgeon obeyed. It was before the use of anaesthetics, and when many mechanical-surgical appliances now in use were unknown. The boy was tortured, but the mother looked on, aided and abetted in the torture, denied all her son's piteous pleadings, yet shed not a tear. She nursed him with almost superhuman patience and endurance through months of misery, during which he lay bound, and often reproached her that she did not let him die out of his pain. He did not die, nor become a helpless cripple, but recovered the full use of his entire body. And that body held no common mind. He was a genius, a well-known American author, who lived seventy-eight years.

A thought awakened by these facts, however, not the man's history, is our subject.

We suffer, in our agony we wish we were dead, or had never been born. We cry to God for help, and think he hears us not because our pain is not removed. Again, we behold the suffering of those we love better than ourselves, and our heart's wail for their anguish is more piteous than for our own. We say, "How can a God of love, a Heavenly Father omnipotent, see it without interposing, nay, order it, and deny our pleadings? Satan tempts us, 'Can there be a God of love?' and we are in danger of saying in our heart—like the fool—"There is no God."

Is there a suggestion of help for all this in the history of those broken bones and that mother's relation to them? Has our Heavenly Father taken the desperate case of our fallen, disjunct humanity in hand, because he would have life, not death, our portion? Can Omnipotence, even, interpose? That mother could have intervened to save her son from suffering, yet did not. Did she love him? Answer, every mother who has stood beside a son's cross, with the sword "through thine own soul also." Does God love us though we suffer, though we cry and he is silent? Let his Word answer: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;" "The Lord is not willing that any should perish;" "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth;" "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted."

Oh, well is it for us, with our broken bones, that we have a Father whose love, tender as a mother's, is wiser for us than are our doctors, or that we are for ourselves!—*Illus. Chris. Weekly.*

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised.—*Psalms 113: 3.*



THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT;
OR, THE REWARD OF IMPORTUNITY.

(Luke xi. 5-13)

At midnight to his sleeping friend
He turns, and knocking at the door,
He begs and prays that he will lend
Three loaves to him from out his store.

"For at my gate 'e'en now there stands
A friend of mine, all travel-worn
And unexpected, who demands
Comfort and food before the morn."

His half-waked friend, within, replies
"Trouble me not, my door is barr'd,
My children sleep, I cannot rise."
Such his refusal cold and hard.

But he, without, quits not the door:
More strongly pressing his request,
He knocks still louder than before,
And gives his churlish friend no rest;

Till, through the window, from above,
The loaves are granted to his plea,
Grudgingly granted—not for love,
But for his importunity.

We have a Friend, who slumbers not,
To all our needs and cares awake:
At midnight dark, or noonday hot,
To Him our sorrows we may take.

When'er we humbly ask He hears,
Or earnest seek, He marks our cry,
And when we knock with sobs and tears,
He opens to us instantly.

The bar of sin, which closed the door,
Himself has taken clean away:
The gate lies open ever more
To all who trust in Him and pray.

In every pressing want or woe,
Which weighs on us, or those we love,
To our true Friend, O let us go,
And He will help us from above.

He is not troubled with our prayer,
Or weary of our urgent plea:
He bids us cast on him our care,
He loves our importunity!

RICHARD WILTON.