

that he wanted a crocodile, and would I do so good as to crawl along on all fours a little bit, I would make such a wonderfully fine looking crocodile. You can imagine that I had no desire to do it. But, will you believe it, the boy continued to beg until nothing remained for me but—

"To do his will and make a crocodile? Oh, wife, wife, that I could have been present!" The doctor laughed till he had to hold his sides. "That must have been a spectacle for the gods. Will you not repeat it for me?"

But his wife was unwilling. "Why are you not drinking out of your customary cup?" the astonished doctor asked of his wife.

"Broken! Your cup out of which you have drunk since your girlhood, and by which you set so great store? Well, I would not have wished to be the one to break it."

"If it did not do it purposely."

"If? What for? That is not to say Stina? Perhaps the mischievous boy, what?"

She only nodded.

"Well, I suppose you gave him a good whipping."

"I wanted to in my first anger, but he didn't allow me to."

"He didn't offer resistance?" asked the doctor, with wrinkled brow.

"Oh, dear, no! But he was so overcome with repentance and sorrow that I should have offended him to have pushed him from me."

"And you preferred to pardon him, and you gave him some punishes for his fright, what?"

"No, only a handful of dried plums," said his wife half aloud.

"Oh, you women, you women," called the doctor. "Not one of you is like another. Only what is no orphan asylum there?"

"The new manager is said to exercise a strict government."

"In the orphan asylum?" asked the frightened wife.

"Yes, I have heard to-day that the admittance of the two older boys is as good as decided. There is a meeting of the trustees next week, when the thing will be formally acted upon."

She gave her husband a second cup of coffee and slowly said, "So then the lovely boy has to go into an orphan asylum?"

"Do you think they only take ugly children there?"

"The lively, joyous child?"

"They will soon break him of his excessive merriment."

"You, with the stick. It is no art to intimidate a defenseless child. No one asks whether they make a frank, happy-hearted boy thereby hypocritical and obdurate. Yes, if he were as quiet and circumspect as his brother, he would be very well brought up in an orphan asylum, but with his temperamental, No, Albert!"

"—a bent tapingly toward her husband—do not send the poor boy away; let him stay here. One child more or less one doesn't notice. Is it not so? You will let me have the boy?"

"For my part I have nothing against it, but—"

"That is to say, he stays. Oh, you good husband! But be quiet a moment. It seems as if I heard the boy outside on the stairs. There he sits perched again on the banister, sliding down till he certainly will break his neck. Oh, how one has to worry herself with such a boy!" She had gone, and the doctor gazed after her with a very contented smile.

A few days passed. The doctor had begged his wife to say nothing of the impending changes of their fate until everything was finally decided.

"I am sorry that he has to leave alone," she said, while sitting near her husband a few evenings after, looking over the things that the oldest boy was to take with him to the orphan asylum.

"But you yourself must say that I cannot keep them all. He is the oldest, and moreover he is so still and sensible he certainly will feel content in the orphan asylum. I do not believe either the separation from his brothers and sisters will be especially hard for him. He does not seem to have much feeling."

"Perhaps he simply does not show it. He was the favorite of his mother."

"And his brothers and sisters are all so much prettier and attractive than he," said the astonished wife.

"Perhaps that very thing made him so much the dearest to his mother."

The doctor's wife reflected a little. "Well, of course to his mother. But I will not say anything against him. He does what I want him to, is industrious and willing, but I can find no heart in him. He can, of course, visit his brothers and sisters often and have good friends in us."

The doctor made no reply. But when his wife went to bed that night she had a certain feeling of dissatisfaction with herself, without exactly knowing the reason why.

"Just see whether I am not right about the boy," said Mrs. Brandt the next morning as the doctor remained sitting a few minutes after he had finished his breakfast. "He has been sitting there a long time motionless and speechless. There is no life in him. His brothers and sisters would not play and shout about him as they please, he doesn't even kiss them."

"Come here, my boy," the doctor called to him as he sat in the corner holding his head in both hands. "Does anything all you?"

"My head pains me."

"Since when?"

"Since always." That means, I guess, since you came here, doesn't it?"

The boy nodded.

"And what else pains you?"

"Very seriously. As well as I can judge he is coming down with brain fever."

She clasped her hands in terror. "And just now! What shall I do with the other children?"

"Well, well, the disease is not contagious, but he needs absolute quiet. It will be best if I report at once to the hospital and have him taken there. It is possible that the disease may take a bad turn."

"Do you think he will die?"

"The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "He has carried the disease too long unobserved."

His wife became suddenly very serious and quiet. "Then the boy shall not be allowed to go to the hospital," she said resolutely.

"But you wanted to have him leave anyway."

"Yes, if he had kept well. My heart is not much drawn to this child, it is true, but just for that reason I will do my duty by him. I could never enjoy the other children if I should allow their brother to die in the hospital."

"That is all very fine," said the doctor quietly. "But where will you put him? Perfect quiet is indispensable."

"He can lie in Stina's gable-chamber. It is sunny and quiet there. Stina can set up her bed in the kitchen while he is sick."

"If that would do. But who would take care of him? Neither you nor Stina has time."

"No, but I will let old Mrs. Miller, who took such good care of me two years ago, come. When she has to rest I will stay with him. Don't make any objections. I guess I can stand at the call of your patients day and night the year round."

The doctor pressed his hand fondly over his wife's head and said: "Well, then, in God's name make your preparations with Stina. Meanwhile I will send the nurse and the necessary things from the drug-gist's."

Hard days and still harder nights followed. It seemed as if the boy could not wait to follow his mother. Hour after hour he lay at fever heat calling her name, until the parched lips refused to speak.

"I have very little hope," said the doctor, when several days later, after careful examination, he was about to leave the boy for the night. "If the fever does not abate early to-morrow morning he is lost."

"Then I will stay with him to-night," said his wife decidedly. "You will weary yourself out. What one must do, that he can."

The doctor lovingly clasped her hand. "If you need me, call me."

The hours of the night passed slowly by. With wide-open eyes the boy tossed restlessly about on his bed moaning and wailing. "Mother, mother," and over and over again, "Mother," sounded piteously through the room. The heart of the doctor's wife melted in compassion. Stroking his cheeks, she bent over him caressingly.

The boy's countenance suddenly changed. "Is it you, mother? Are you here at last?" He threw both arms tightly about her neck and drew her so near that her cheeks touched his.

A feeling of joy stole over her as the fearful tension of his limbs relaxed and his heart beat less violently. But as often as she attempted to loose herself from his arms, he cried out in anguish.

"Nothing remained for her but to draw her feet carefully upon the bed and lie close beside him. His regular breathing assured her that he was asleep, and while she rapturously pressed her cheek against that of the boy who had called her mother, sleep closed also her weary eyes.

The sun was shining brightly when she awoke. Her husband stood bending over the bed. She started up in fright. "I hope I have not been asleep."

"You have, indeed. But see here," he pointed to the boy, who lay in a deep, sweet sleep, with drops of perspiration covering his brow. "He is saved, thanks to you."

"Fears of joy filled her eyes. "The danger is over," continued the husband. "Once on the road to recovery he will recuperate rapidly. Perhaps he will be sufficiently improved in fourteen days to be removed to his new home."

"Do you indeed suppose that I would allow the boy to be taken away from me after this?" asked the doctor's wife softly. "He has called me mother, and although he only did it in his fever, I will be a mother to him. He belongs to me."

"So you would rather send the younger boy to the orphan asylum?"

"No, I will not do that."

"Or the girl?"

"Certainly not."

"But you will still less wish to give up the two little ones?"

"All five?" the doctor's voice had an uncertain sound. "You allow yourself to be carried away by your good heart. Consider how risky it is with strange children; one never knows what is in them."

"That can be said also of one's own children."

"They take our kindness as their rightful claim."

"They have a right to do so."

"And when they are grown up it suddenly occurs to them that they are not our children."

"If we were two parents to them this would not be so."

"And all the trouble and work they make."

"I will gladly take that upon myself, but—" she glanced anxiously at him—"perhaps all five are too many for you?"

"No!" He took both her hands and said: "Anna, when the poor mother was struggling with death, and could not die because of her distress for her children I bent over her and said: 'I will take the children and they shall be my own.' 'All five?' she asked, incredulously. 'All five,' I replied, 'so help me God.' Thereupon she died in peace."

"Poor mother," whispered his wife, hiding her face on his shoulder. Suddenly she raised her head. "But, Albert, if you promised that, you brought the children into the house with the express purpose of keeping them all."

He nodded assent.

"But what if I had not been willing?"

"I know your heart."

"So? And if you know my heart, why did you not come confidently and tell me what you wished?"

The doctor put on a somewhat artificial expression. "You wanted that very day to have new floors and modern style of carpets and curtains and—"

She was about to interrupt him when a feeble sound came from the God. The boy lay there with clear, fearless eyes looking over at her. Had he heard what she had said? Did he suspect what decision she had made?

"Mother," he whispered softly, stretching out his weak hand to her. She threw herself down on her knees before the bed. "Yes, my child, I will be your mother. She covered his face with kisses and sat down on the bed beside him, and tenderly smoothing the moist hair from his forehead, sank smiling through her tears. "What fine soft hair he has! And such good honest eyes! And—"

"Now that sounds like a genuine mother," called the doctor laughing. "I see indeed that you will spoil the child in a most terrible manner."

"You don't say so. But, listen, there are the other children outside in the hall. They would like to get in. Can they be admitted?"

The doctor was already at the door. There stood the little group of children, huddled together, as they had been a few weeks previous, the little ones in front and the older ones in the background. But this time they were not so timid and bashful.

They tripped confidently nearer, and while the two little ones climbed into the lap of the doctor's wife, and the older ones crowded close to her they gazed curiously at their brother, who lay upon the bed before them so pale and still.

With one hand she held that of the sick boy and with the other tightly clasped the other children; and, beaming with joy, exclaimed to her husband: "Our children! May God bless them and make them happy!"

"All five!" added the doctor.

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WHOSE HAPPINESS?

The small boy was drawing his still smaller neighbor along the walk in his little wagon. He looked up beaming, when a watchful face appeared at the doorway.

"I'm trying to make Fannie happy, aunt," he said.

"What a beautiful spirit for the child to have!" exclaimed the admiring aunt, as she closed the door.

But presently, as she gazed from the window, it seemed to her that the effort, however commendable, was not very successful.

See Fannie was evidently afraid to ride, and was much more inclined to climb out of the wagon and draw it herself. This Master Robbie stoutly resisted.

"She doesn't like riding, Robbie," explained the aunt. "You must let her be horse if you want to make her happy."

"But I want to draw it myself. I want to make her happy doing things I like best to do," answered Robbie, with a very unamiable scowl.

Poor little boy! It was selfishness, after all.—Wellspring.

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CHILDREN'S CORNER

THE CHILD'S PETITION.

She stole into the church alone, With shy and timid grace, A little child with wondrous eyes, And smiling, dimpled face.

"I come to see you, dearest Lord, Sweet Jesus, are you here? Ah! yes, the light is burning bright, I know that you are near."

"I'm glad that we are all alone, Because I want to bring A letter to your Sacred Heart To ask for everything."

"Now, if some older people saw Me write this little letter, They'd take it, maybe, from my hand And try to make it better."

"But no one saw me write it, Lord; I think it's all right; And you won't mind if it's spelt wrong, Because it's clean and white."

"I'll drop it in your treasure-box, And kiss it so 'till I will speed Right up to heaven to your heart, To ask for all we need."

"And then, to make it very sure, I'll say a little more, To forward quick this little note I wrote, dear Lord, to you."

—Sentinel of the Blessed Sacrament.

YOUR MOTHER.

Boys and girls should learn by heart the following words, which were written by the great Lord Macaulay: Young people, look in those eyes, listen to the dear voice, and notice the feeling of even a touch that is bestowed upon you by that gentle hand. Make much of it while you have the most precious of all gifts, a loving mother. Read the unfathomable love in those eyes; the kind anxiety of that tone and look, however slight your pain. In after life you may have friends—fond, dear, kind friends—but never will you have again the inexpressible love and gentleness lavished upon you which none but a mother bestows. Often do I sigh in my struggle with the hard, unending world for the deep sweet security I felt when of an evening resting on her bosom, I listened to some quiet tale, suitable to my age, read in her tender, untiring voice. Never can I forget her sweet caresses cast upon me when I appeared asleep; never her kiss of peace at night. Years have passed away since we laid her by my father in the old churchyard, yet still her voice whispers from her grave and her eye watches over me as I visit spots long since hallowed by her memory.

SEWING DONE BY ANTS.

Ants are credited with so many marvellous accomplishments that a new one must be remarkable to the noteworthy. Mr. E. M. Green, of Ceylon, an authority upon insect habits, has, however, made an observation which is well worth putting on record. He has watched red ants holding grubs in their mouths and using the web they spun to repair a rent in their nest. Some leaves which had been fastened together by the ants were separated by Mr. Green, and in a short time after he backed and forwards across the gap. Closer observation showed that each grub was held in the jaws of one of the worker ants, and its movements were directed as required. A continuous thread of silk issued from the mouth of each grub, and was used by the ants to sew up the rent in their shelter. There were no grubs in the neighborhood, and those used were obtained from a nest at some distance. This deliberate use of a naturally formed web as a sewing thread is as astonishing as any instance of the intelligence of ants yet observed.

HER SECOND THOUGHT.

"You pretty apple blossoms, Why do you fly away Just when the spring is sweetest? We want you all to stay. There's not a single flower More beautiful than you; Oh, stay, because we love you, The whole long summer through."

The apple blossoms whispered, Still sending down a shower; "You darling little maiden, We've bloomed our springtime hour, If we too long should linger, Our bouquets would never hold For all the little children, Big apples, red and gold."

The little maiden pondered, As pink and pearly white, Came showering the petals Upon her ringlets bright. She laughed, and shook them lightly, And then looked up to say: "You sweetest apple blossoms, Be quick and fly away." —Sidney Dayre.

WORK OF THE EARTH WORM.

When we behold a wide, turf-covered expanse, we should remember that its smoothness, on which so much of its beauty depends, is mainly due to all the inequalities having been slowly levelled by worms. It is a marvellous reflection that the whole of the superficial mould over any such expanse has passed, and will pass again, every few years through the bodies of worms. The plough is one of the most ancient and most valuable of man's inventions; but long before he existed the land was, in fact, regularly ploughed by earth worms. It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world as have these lowly organized creatures. Some other animals, however, still more lowly organized—namely, corals—have done far more conspicuous work in having constructed innumerable reefs and islands in the great oceans; but these are almost confined to the tropical zone.

THE SWEETEST SIDE OF LIVING.

We long for fame and fortune, And we gain them, it may be; We strive for peace and power, And the pomp of high degree; Then we learn, in all the weariness Of souls drunk deep with pride, That the sweetest side of living Is the sweet home side.

No rich man's gold may win it, Nor the poor man's lack may lose; Just love that's true and tender Is the purchase price to use; And gladness and content are yours, Whatever shall befall, For the sweetest side of living Is the sweet home side.

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We never regret unkind acts, but often grieve over unkindly and unloving ones, when friends who have passed away can feel our love no more.

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