

The Family Circle.

CATCHING THE SUNBEAM.

Tired of playing, tired of toy,
Little Johnnie, our two-year boy,
With his bright blue eyes and golden hair
Sat on the floor by his mother's chair.

'Twas just as the day was beginning to die;
And the sun, ere descending the western sky,
Threw a parting glance through the open door,
In a golden beam upon the floor.

Quickly he seized his little white hat,
And scrambling away as fast as a cat,
He held it firmly upon the floor,
So that the beam should escape no more.

Clapping his hands with joyous glee,
While his laugh rippled out so merrily;
He looked with beaming face into mine,
Saying, "Auntie, I have caught the shine!"

JESSIE AND HER KITTEN.

"You're a silly girl, Jessie, to choose a present for your kitten, instead of one for yourself," said Ned Travis, as he and his sister stood together on the porch of the old farm-house in which they lived. "If it was my birthday now, I'd make a better choice."

"But I'd rather had a collar for pussy's neck," said Jessie; "she is so white, and keeps herself so clean. I think she deserves one—if you don't mind getting it."

"Mind; not a bit! I said I would get anything you wanted, if it didn't cost too much, and so I will."

"Be sure it's red," were Jessie's parting words, as she came out into the farm-yard to see her brother set off.

"I'll not forget," answered Ned, "but I must not keep father waiting; see, the wagon is on its way. Take up your kitten, Jessie, for if big Carlo comes this way he'll snap her up and swallow her at a mouthful," and with a merry laugh at Jessie's horrified look, Ned ran after the wagon which his father was driving to the neighboring market-town.

Jessie stood and watched her brother out of sight. Then she remembered a hedgerow where blackberries were plentiful, and as she had a holiday to-day, she thought she could not do better than go and see if she could find some ripe ones.

"If you can bring the home enough," said her mother, as she gave her a little basket, "I will make you and Ned a pie of them for your supper; but you're not going to take the kitten with you surely?"

"It's my birthday you know, mother, so I want her to enjoy it too; and she's such a darling!" added Jessie, giving the favorite a squeeze that nearly took away its breath.

"As you please, then, only don't go too far; and don't overtake yourself," and with a promise to remember her mother's wishes, Jessie set out for her ramble in the fields.

Mrs. Travis gazed after the little figure till it was out of sight, and then returned with an anxious look on her face to her work in the dairy. It was but a year since two of her children had died, and since the death of her sisters, Jessie had been so grave and thoughtful, and so fragile in health, that Mrs. Travis feared to lose her too.

The kitten was a new treasure, and the many smiles its possession had brought to Jessie's face gave joy to the hearts of her parents and brother, who were thankful to hear her cheerful laugh and light step more like what they had been a year ago.

Jessie soon came to the blackberry hedge, and having nearly filled her basket and eaten as many as she cared for, she sat down in the shade to rest. The day was sultry, and as Jessie was not strong, no wonder that she soon fell asleep. By-and-by she woke up suddenly; some one was pulling the basket from beneath her hand. Opening her eyes, she saw Tom Spencer, a lad three or four years older than herself, of whom she was greatly afraid. She jumped up, holding her basket tight, while pussy springing off her lap, retreated under the hedge.

"A fine lot of berries you've picked," said Tom, trying to take the basket; "I was wanting something to eat—I'd no breakfast, so I mean to have them; you can pick more."

"So can you, Tom," cried Jessie, "and you shan't have these—they're for Ned's supper."

Then ensued a struggle, in which the basket was broken and the blackberries crushed upon the ground. Meanwhile pussy's mewling turned Jessie's thoughts from the basket and fruit.

"Oh, my kitten—where is she?"

But Tom caught sight of her first, and thrusting his arm into the hedge regardless of the fresh rents which his ragged sleeve received, he pulled her out by the tail, and held her aloft in triumph.

"Now I'll serve you out for this, see if I don't Miss. I'll pitch her into the pond down yonder, and if she can't swim she'll be drowned, that's all!"

"You shan't do it! you shan't—give me my kitten, you wicked boy!" cried Jessie, clinging to him, but Tom hurried her from him with such force that she fell to the ground. He waited a moment, expecting her to cry, or attempt to rise, but when he saw that she did not move he became alarmed. Presently he went to her and tried to lift her up, letting the kitten free, but at the sight of her white face, and some drops of blood upon her forehead, he put her down again. Had he killed her? What should he do? Some laborers were coming up the field; one of them he thought was Samuel Dawley who often worked at Mr. Travis's farm. Without waiting another minute he made his way through the hedge, and ran across the fields.

The men soon came to where Jessie was lying; they lifted her up, and, while one carried her and the kitten home, another pursued Tom, whom he guessed to have been the cause of the accident. Jessie was not badly hurt; she had been stunned for the moment, and a slight cut on one side of her head seemed all that was really the mat-

ter. By the time she reached the farm she was much better, and soon, lying on her mother's bed, with pussy comfortably curled up beside her, she fell into a sound sleep, from which she woke much refreshed.

"Will father and Ned soon be home?" she asked, as her mother came in to see how she was. "I hope they will soon be here."

"There's some one else don't hope it, I reckon," observed Mrs. Travis.

"Who, mother?"

"Tom Spencer, to be sure. Samuel Dawley caught him, and his aunt says she hopes your father will flog him soundly, so he's locked up in the barn till they come in from market."

"How did Samuel know he hurt me?" asked Jessie.

"He frightened him into confessing, I believe; and I hope your father will punish him well. Since his mother ran away and left him, he has been the pest of the place."

"Poor Tom!" said Jessie softly, and then she was very quiet for some time.

By-and-by her father and brother came in. Jessie was down stairs, and except for a bandage on her head, and a much paler face than usual, she looked none the worse for her adventure, which Mrs. Travis quickly related.

"I'll give him a lesson!" said the farmer, going to the door.

"Oh, father, please don't!" exclaimed Jessie. "I know you will hurt him badly."

"I think so—he deserves it."

"But please don't—it's my birthday, you know, and I couldn't bear any one to be hurt to-day—don't go to him till after tea, please."

"You think, may be, it'll come less hard on him when I've got over it a bit, eh, little one?" said the farmer, fondly stroking his daughter's hair, "and I fancy you're about right—so, as it's your birthday, we'll have tea first and settle with Tom afterwards."

Meanwhile Ned produced the red collar, which fitted pussy nicely, and exceedingly delighted its young mistress, who could do little else than admire it all tea-time.

Tom was crouching in a corner of the barn. The day had seemed very long to him—he was faint with hunger, and would have slept, but every footstep in the yard, every voice near made him fancy the farmer had returned, and that thought kept him awake. As the hours passed, he began to wish Mr. Travis would come, then it would soon be over, and he could creep to his aunt's cottage, and perhaps get a crust to eat before he went to bed. And yet when the key turned in the lock and the door was opened, his heart sank within him, for he knew that the farmer's arm was a heavy one. But it was a very light step that came towards him, and looking up, he saw it was Jessie.

"I've brought you something to eat," said she, softly; "aren't you very hungry?"

"Yes, very."

"It's part of our blackberry pie, and it's very nice. Some one brought mother some berries, so it didn't matter our spoiling those."

The contents of the plate did, indeed, look nice to hungry Tom, and he stretched out his hand eagerly to take it, then some other feeling came, and he turned away.

"I don't want your pie!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry," and the tone was so sincere that Tom looked up surprised.

"Why did you bring it?"

"Because I felt so sorry for you."

"I've been thrashed before," answered Tom, bitterly, "my skin ought to be tough by now."

"It's not that I'm sorry for," said Jessie sadly.

"What then?"

"Because you're such a bad boy."

And Jessie hesitated between her wish to speak the truth and a desire not to seem unkind.

"And I'm sure you must be miserable—all wicked people are."

"I'm used to it," said Tom, trying hard to speak, as if he didn't care, "and floggings won't make me any better."

"But you are not going to be flogged, father's promised me; and Jesus Christ can make you better, and I think He will, for I asked Him this afternoon. It would please Him so if you'd only try to be good."

"He wouldn't care," and Tom turned away.

"But He would—He would. Shouldn't I be glad, and father and mother, and your aunt? and Christ is better than the very best of us—ever so far better, teacher says. He really cares whether we love Him or not, and He does love us so much. Won't thinking that make you want to be good?" and in her eagerness Jessie knelt down by his side and peered anxiously into his face.

Tom kept it turned away as much as he could, and tried hard not to show what he felt, but when she laid her little hand on his, and tearfully asked, "Oh, Tom, won't you try to please the Saviour?"

"SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD."

Here comes Whitefield, the man who stood before twenty thousand at a time, to preach the gospel; who, in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, has testified the truth of God, and who could count his converts by thousands. Here he comes, the man that endured persecution and scorn, and yet who was not moved; the man of whom the world was not worthy; who lived for his fellow-men, and died at last for their cause. Stand by, angels, and admire while the Master takes him by the hand and says: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." See how free grace honors the man whom it enabled to do valiantly.

Hark! Who is this that comes there? A poor, thin looking creature, that on earth was a consumptive. There she lay three long years upon her bed of sickness. Was she a prince's daughter? For it seems Heaven is making much stir about her. No; she was a poor girl that earned her living by her needle, and she worked herself to death; stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night; and here she comes. She went prematurely to her grave, but she is coming, like a shock of corn fully ripe, into heaven; and her Master says: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." She takes her place by the side of Whitefield.

Ask what she ever did, and you find out that she used to live down some dark alley in London; and there used to be another poor girl come to work with her, and that poor girl, when she came to work with her, was a gay and volatile creature, and this consumptive girl told her about Christ; and they used, when she was well enough, to creep out of an evening to go to chapel or to church together. It was hard at first to get the other one to go, but she used to press her lovingly; and when the girl went wild a little, she never gave her up. She used to say: "O Jane, I wish you loved the Saviour," and when Jane was not there she used to pray for her, and when she was there she prayed with her; and now and then, when she was stitching away, read a page out of the Bible to her, for poor Jane could not read; and with many tears she tried to tell her about the Saviour who loved her and gave himself for her.

At last, after many a day of hard persuasion, and many an hour of sad disappointment, and many a night of sleepless, tearful prayer, at last she lived to see the girl profess her love to Christ; and the poor, consumptive needle-woman had said to her, "Well done"—and what more could an archangel have had said to him? "She hath done what she could."—*Spurgeon's Sermon on the "Ten Talents."*

NELLY'S PRAYER.

Dear children have you learned how graciously Jesus answers the prayers of even the little ones? If he has taught you this himself, there is no need that I should give you proofs of it; but some of our larger children go on and on, making endless mistakes, and suffering bitter losses, from not having learned the easy remedy.

The other day, a Christian mother, whose heart rejoices at every sign that her flock of little ones is led by the Good Shepherd, told me that one of her little girls had learned a lesson in a prayer that she would never forget. She came in from school greatly irritated, saying that she never wanted teachers to disappoint and tease her. After her first excited feeling had spent itself, her father said to her quietly, "Nelly did you ever try praying for your teacher, to see if God would not make her more gentle?"

"Why, no, father," said the little girl.

"Well," said he, "try that, and see how things get on to-morrow."

He said no more, but watched the end; and the next day Nelly came bounding into the house, as she had not done for many a day, saying, "Oh father, you were right; you don't know how good Miss K— was to me to-day! I have had such a happy day!"

"Well, my little girl," said the father, "God has many ways of answering our prayers; and I suspect that one way he took to answer you, was to make you more obedient and studious."

She had not thought of this before; but now began looking back over the day, and then, in sweet simplicity, said, "Yes, father, I think that was so. I loved to study to-day, my heart was so happy."

Many days after, she said to him, as he came in at nightfall, "Dear father, I never shall forget again to ask God for everything I want; for since that day my teacher has been so changed!"

"Yes," said the glad father, "and my little girl is changed too."

Christ knew, when he was teaching that lesson, that it would bear its fruits; that every day some want would come up that he could satisfy; and in his generous love, he longed to have that young heart come to him and be comforted.—*The Witness.*

THE SUNDAY STONE.

In one of our English coal mines there is a constant formation of limestone, caused by the trickling of water through the rocks. This water contains a great many particles of lime, which are deposited in the mine, and, as the water passes off, these become hard, and form limestone. This stone would always be white, like marble, were it not that men are working in the mine, and as the black dust rises from the coal, it mixes with the soft lime, and in that way a black stone is formed.

Now, in the night, when there is no coal dust rising, the stone is white; then again, the next day, when the miners are at work, another black layer is formed, and so on alternately, black and white, through the

week, until Sunday comes. Then, if the miners keep holy the Sabbath, a much larger layer of white stone will be formed than before. There will be the white stone of Saturday night, and the whole of Sunday, so that every seventh day the white layer will be about three times as thick as any of the others. But if they work on the Sabbath, they see it marked against them in the stone. Hence the miners call it "The Sunday Stone."

Perhaps, many who now break the Sabbath, would try to spend it better if there were a "Sunday Stone" where they could see their unkept Sabbaths with their black marks.

But God needs no such record on earth to know how all our Sabbaths are spent. His record is kept above. All our Sabbath deeds are written there, and we shall see them at the last.

Be very careful to keep your Sabbath pure and white, and not allow the dust of worldliness and sin to tarnish the purity of the blessed day.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."—*Christian Treasury.*

A REMARKABLE WELSH PATRIARCH.

The *Edinburgh Daily Review* has an interesting notice of a Welsh Independent Minister, the Rev. David Williams, of the county of Brecon. "He had been, come next summer, 64 years minister of the same congregation. His predecessor was their pastor for 50 years, and his predecessor was their minister for 60 years, so that the churches still under his care have had only three ministers during the long space of 174 years; and what is still as remarkable, the peace of these congregations has never been once disturbed by a single jar or discord during all these long years! Peace has always prevailed among its various members. It was only at the beginning of last January (1867) that he lost his wife, after a happy union of 61 years, and that was the first time that a coffin crossed his threshold during his unusually long married life, all his children, seven in number, being still alive. He preaches now generally three times every Sabbath, and several times during the week, and although in his 89th year, he is up early on Monday morning, and does not know, except by report, what some persons mean by the word 'Mondayish.' For upwards of 55 years he has been one of the most popular preachers in Wales, and the great attraction on 'field days,' in North and South Wales, when many thousands are present to attend open-air services; and so great a traveller has been on horseback, that he must at least have spent ten years of his life in the saddle. Talk of the youthful buoyancy of the late Lord Palmerston! why our patriarch parson of eighty-eight would have walked and run him off his legs, and wearied him or any other rider. He is completely weather-proof. Rain, snow, tempest, and storm he makes no account of, and even now he would think nothing of riding forty miles over a rough country and conducting public service in the evening. He has been for many years a staunch teetotaler. He has an iron constitution. He is a perfect specimen of the Welsh build—short legs, broad shoulders, and a deep chest. He has enjoyed extraordinary good health, for during the lengthened period of his ministry he has never once been disabled from preaching on a Sabbath. Nature has endowed him with all the natural elements of an orator. His temperament is highly mercurial, and his affections intensely ardent. He speaks even now with unflinching fluency and remarkable force. He is distinguished for his catholicity of spirit, and is equally beloved by good men of every religious persuasion. His character is spotless, his theology orthodox, and his preaching highly evangelical."

THE ARCTIC NIGHT.

But if the Arctic night can be endured with little strain upon the physical, it is nevertheless, a severe trial both to the moral and the intellectual faculties. The darkness which so long clothes nature unfolds to the senses a new world and the senses accommodate themselves to that world but poorly. The cheering influences of the rising sun which invite to labor; the soothing influences of the evening twilight which invite to repose; the change from day to night, and from night to day, which lightens the burden of the weary mind and aching body, strengthening the hope and sustaining the courage in the great life-battle of the dear home-land are withdrawn, and in the constant longing for light, the mind and body weary with the changeless progress of time, fail to find repose where all is rest. The grandeur of nature ceases to give delight to the dull sympathies. The heart longs continually for new associations, new objects, and new companionships. The dark and drear solitude oppresses the understanding; the desolation which every where reigns haunts the imagination; the silence, dark, and drear and profound, becomes a terror.

And yet there is in the Arctic night much that is attractive to the lover of nature.—There is in the flashing Aurora, in the play of the moonlight upon the hills and icebergs, in the wonderful clearness of the starlight, in the broad expanse of the ice-fields, in the lofty grandeur of the mountains and glaciers in the naked fierceness of the storms, much that is both sublime and beautiful. But they speak a language of their own—a language, rough, rugged and severe.

Nature is here exposed on a gigantic scale. Out of the glassy sea the cliffs rear their dark fronts and frown grimly over the desolate waste of ice-clad waters. The mountain peaks glittering in the clear cold atmosphere pierce the very heavens, their heads hoary with unnumbered ages. The glaciers pour their crystal torrents into the sea in floods of

immeasurable magnitude. The very air, disdaining the gentle softness of other climes, bores forth a loftier majesty, and seems to fill the universe with a boundless transparency; and the stars pierce it sharply. And the moon fills it with a cold refulgence. There is neither warmth nor coloring underneath this ethereal robe of night. No broad windows open in the east; no gold and crimson curtains fall in the west, upon a world clothed in blue and green and purple, melting into one harmonious whole, a tinted cloak of graceful loveliness. Under the shadow of the eternal night, nature needs no drapery, and requires no adornment. The glassy sea, the tall cliff, the lofty mountain, the majestic glacier, do not blend one with the other.—Each stands forth alone, clothed only with Solitude. Sable priestess of the arctic winter, she has wrapped the world in a winding sheet, and thrown her web and woof over the very face of nature.

I have wandered away to some distant valley where all sounds were hushed and the very air was still and solemn as the tomb.—And it is here that the Arctic night is most impressive, where its true spirit is revealed, where its wonders are unloosed to sport and play with the mind's vague imaginings. The heavens above and the earth beneath reveal only an endless fathomless quiet. There is nowhere around me evidence of life or motion. I stand alone in the midst of mighty hills. Their tall crests climb upward, and are lost in the gray vault of the skies. The dark cliffs standing against their slopes of white are steps of a vast amphitheatre. The mind finding no rest on their bold summits, wanders into space. The moon, weary with her long vigil sinks to her repose. The Pleiades no longer breathe their sweet influences. Cassiopea and Andromeda and Orion, and all the infinite host of unnumbered constellations, fail to infuse one spark of joy into this dead atmosphere. They have lost all their tenderness, and are cold and pulseless. The eye leaves them and returns to earth, and the trembling ear awaits something that will break the oppressive stillness. But no foot-fall of living thing reaches it; there is no cry of bird, no tree among whose branches the wind can sigh and moan. The pulsations of my own heart are alone heard in the great void; and as the blood courses through the sensitive organization of the ear, I am oppressed, as with discordant sounds. Silence has ceased to be a negative. It has become endowed with positive attributes. I seem to hear and see and feel it. It stands forth as a frightful spectre, filling the mind with the overpowering consciousness of universal death proclaiming the end of all things, and heralding the everlasting future. Its presence is unendurable. I spring from the rock on which I have been seated, I plant my feet heavily in the snow to banish its awful presence, and sound rolls through the night and drives away the phantom. I have seen no expression on the face of Nature so filled with terror as THE SILENCE OF THE ARCTIC NIGHT.—*Dr. Hays's "Open Polar Sea."*

PRAYING AND DOING.

"Bless the poor little children who haven't any beds to-night," prayed a little boy, just before he lay down in his nice warm cot, on a cool windy night.

As he rose from his knees, his mother said to him—

"You have just asked God to bless the poor children: what will you do to bless them?"

The boy thought a moment.

"Why if I had a hundred cakes, enough for ourselves, I'd give them some."

"But you have no cakes."

"Well, when I get money enough to buy all the things that I want, and have some over, I'll give them some."

"But you haven't half enough money to buy all you want, and perhaps never will have. I want to know what you will do to bless the poor now?"

"I'll give them some bread."

"You have no bread; the bread is mine."

"Then I could earn money, and buy a loaf myself."

"Take things as they now are. You know what you have that is your own. What are you willing to give to help the poor?"

"I'll give them half my money. I have eight cents, and I'll give them four—would not that be right?"

"Four cents would not go very far in making a child so poor that it had no bed, as comfortable and well provided for as you are. Four cents toward food and clothes, and books and a bed, for such a one, and four cents just for pencils or candy for yourself, don't seem fair."

"Then mother, I'll give all my money; and I wish I had more to give," said the little fellow, as he took his good night kiss.

Now don't you think his bed was made softer that night by his pity for the poor and shelterless? Don't you think he slept the more sweetly, and that ministering spirits watched his couch more lovingly because he was growing to be somewhat like his Saviour, who "spared not himself, but freely gave himself up for us all."

A heart loosed from the world is a foot out of the snare.

her head seemed all that was really the mat-