

The Family Circle.

BABY'S STOCKING.

Hand up the baby's stocking. Be sure that you don't forget; The dear, little, dimpled darling!

Dear, dear! what a tiny stocking! It doesn't take much to hold Such little pink toes as baby's

I know what we'll do for the baby; I've thought of the very best plan, I'll borrow a stocking of grandma;

Write, "This is the baby's stocking That hangs in the corner here; You never have seen her, Santa,

THE MISSIONARY HENS.

Parson Warburton had been settled over a small church in a farming community long enough to become experimentally familiar with the peculiar parochial trials incident to a scattered population.

The heart of the good parson was largely interested in his people's welfare. Being well aware of the healthful and expansive effects of benevolence, he had sought to enlist their sympathies in the cause of missions, and induce them to exert themselves for its support beyond the small and ceremonious droppings of the monthly collection.

But though in all this variety of labor the worthy minister undoubtedly sowed much good seed, he had the mortification of seeing his congregation marvellously ready to forget sermon, and paper, and story, and map so soon as they were out of sight and hearing, and totally unable to fathom the good man's strange theory that they could be liberal without being rich.

Still Deacons Spicer and Knox continued periodically to travel up and down the aisles, greeted with the smothered chink of "four-pences" and half dimes, and still at the close of each "financial year" the stolid church treasurer reported, without winking, the fatal pitance "for missions" of seven dollars and forty cents.

Parson Warburton was not the man to say fail, however. He studied and prayed over the matter, and kept watch for new suggestions.

At last a thought occurred to him which was speedily made practical in the measure designated in the title of our article.

One day, while out on one of his pastoral rides, he stopped to see Aunt Janeway, and, as he had done before, to take dinner with her. He found the good lady busy at her hen coop.

"Ha," quoth he to himself, "here's a good hint; who shall say I may not make profit by it to the cause of Christ?"

The scene of the housewife among her fowls had furnished him with something better than a sermon.

"Well, aunty," said he, after exchanging greetings with his parishioner, "you have a fine lot of poultry here. How many in all?"

"Twenty," said she, "and a hundred chickens."

"And you'll realize a handsome sum from them in the fall, as is proper and right you should," concluded the parson, and the two went into the house.

"She is not the only sister in my church whose pride is in her poultry," thought the parson, as he followed Aunt Janeway in by the front door.

He made this triumphant generalization with all the satisfaction of a philosopher who has discovered the working principle of a great social problem.

"Aunty," said he, after he had listened patiently to quite a lengthy disquisition upon her poultry affairs by the good lady while she laid the dinner table, "I want to make a proposition to you."

"What is it?" inquired Aunt Janeway, very simply.

"You know it is very right and Christian-like to lay by something, according as the Lord has prospered us, for the support and extension of His Gospel. I want you to promise to give this year the proceeds of one hen to the cause of missions."

"Why, I never thought of that," said Aunt Janeway; "I supposed it was money they wanted."

"To be sure, aunty," returned the minister, "nothing is easier than to make it money. I said the proceeds, you understand."

"O yes, yes. Well, I don't know but I will. I'll see. But come; sit up and have dinner."

They talked the matter over at the meal, and when at length Parson Warburton took his leave he carried with him Aunt Janeway's promise of a year's profits of one of her hens.

Full of his new idea, and stimulated by the success of his first experiment with it, he now called, at his earliest convenience, on every one of his parishioners, and skillfully varying his approaches according to the peculiarities of each case, introduced the subject of the "one hen" contribution.

His effort prospered famously. He was shrewd enough to make his first trials in the likeliest quarters, so that by the time he reached the more stubborn cases he had a long list of subscribers to back his arguments.

To recount the particulars of all his personal interviews with the donors would be too long a story for our limits. Suffice it to say, that after several weeks of indefatigable exertion he secured the pledge of every housewife in his parish to devote to the cause of missions the proceeds of one hen for the current year.

Of course this novel expedient of the minister provoked an unlimited amount of talk. He meant it should, or, at least, he knew it would, and rather encouraged than repressed the loquacity that seemed to advertise his innocent plan.

When the list was full, or rather after every adult name had been secured, he told the Sunday-school, with quiet exultation, and a pleasant twinkle in his eye, how many subscribers he had obtained. After an apt story or two about child benevolence, he assured the young scholars that neither he nor their parents had any notion of leaving them out of the good enterprise. He then drew the mail in a safe place, proposing that every boy and girl should take stock in the missionary fund by contributing a chicken.

The plan pleased the children mightily, and before Monday had passed nearly every coop in the parish had at least one marked missionary chicken in it.

The stir caused by the playfully practical turn given to its benevolence by the inventive parson was beyond all that had happened to that quiet church for unremembered years. It was amusing (considering its cause) to witness the growing enthusiasm for the cause of missions—unprecedented numbers came to the monthly concert to hear the Missionary Herald read and the maps explained. The sewing society began to feel the healthful influence. Gossip forgot her small slander and quoted poultry. The sleepy parish had found just what it needed—a way to do its duty and get wholesome fun out of it. On the whole, Parson Warburton, as he went his rounds and saw what a "hen fever" he had excited, felt not at all reluctant to take the responsibility of it.

Time rolled on. The fowls grow—as everything must when fed in the regular way—magnifying, week by week, the promise of their "proceeds," until the child contributors to the heathen fund, who had graded their philanthropic generosity by the size of a four ounce chicken, supposed to represent a cash value of about one cent, opened their eyes wide to find themselves, each one, the self-sacrificing proprietor of a four pound cockerel or pullet worth a dollar. The older subscribers, watching the increase of their broods, began (some of them) to think the Lord's mortgage a pretty large one. We are afraid that two or three of the good housewives who had not pledged a particular hen in the spring, failed to select the most successful one in the fall. Be that as it may, at any rate, an unusual "run of luck" in the poultry line signalized that year among the farmers of Parson Warburton's parish.

At last the time came for harvesting the results.

It was November, and the consecrated fowls were all fat and ready for the sacrifice—night after night the various roosts of the neighborhood resounded with the familiar "squall" that told of a farm-yard slaughter, and very early one morning the capacious and significant looking wagon of Deacon Spicer drove soberly through the parish, and stopped at nearly every house "taking in cargo." Busily from door to door travelled the deacon's team, till the last "batch" was stowed away, and with a clean white sheet tucked down over the marrowy merchandise, the stout vehicle rumbled off to the market town. He was in good season, the buyers' stand, and disposed of his load to good advantage. He came home at night with the money in his great wallet.

To add eclat to the enterprise, and create occasion among the younger portion of his people to remember its returns, Parson Warburton had proposed to fix a day for all the parish to meet in the meeting-house and hear the report of the hen "proceeds." The day appointed was the day following Deacon Spicer's sale of the poultry at the market. At any other time such a meeting would have been voted entirely out of order, and not to be thought of at all; but now, with the spell of a new benevolence upon their hearts, and a tempting secret before their curiosity, the good people not only endorsed the meeting with their consent, but went to it; thronged it as they never had thronged even a donation party.

Parson Warburton stood up before his congregation, (it seemed as if they had never been so attentive,) and after giving a humorous account of the inception and progress of the enterprise whose success had called them together, his adventures in the prosecution of it, etc., he proceeded to read the names of the contributors, old and young, with the amount in money realized from each one's poultry pledge, and carried out in the margin.

And what do you think it footed up? Four hundred and thirty dollars!

The simple auditor could hardly believe their ears. For a moment all stared in breathless amazement, their faces written all over with exclamation points. There could be no mistake about it, however. They had the items. But when it was announced that a full list of the names of the donors would be sent to the rooms of the

"Board," with the money, and published in the missionary paper, the children could scarcely restrain their exultant enthusiasm. At just the right time "Coronation" was struck up, and the congregation, joining the choir with right good will, sung their triumph into tolerable control by the aid of music and metre.

A short prayer, full of eloquent thanksgiving, closed the exercises, and the delighted assembly dispersed to their homes.—Watchman and Reflector.

A YOUNG DESPERADO.

When John is all snugly curled up in bed, with his rosy cheek resting on one of his scratched and grimy little hands, forming altogether a perfect picture of peace and innocence, it seems hard to realize what a busy, restive, pugnacious, badly ingenious little wretch he is.

I'm sure I don't know how he came by such unpleasant propensities. I am myself the meekest of men. Of course, I don't mean to imply that Johnny inherited his warlike disposition from his mother. She is the gentlest of women. But when you come to Johnny—he's the terror of the whole neighborhood.

He was meek enough at first,—that is to say, for the first six or seven days of his existence. But I verily believe that he wasn't more than eleven days old when he showed a degree of temper that shocked me,—shocked me in one so young. On that occasion he turned very red in the face,—he was quite red before,—doubled up his ridiculous hands in the most threatening manner, and finally, in the impetuosity of rage, punched himself in the eye. When I think of the life he led his mother and Susan during the first eighteen months after his arrival, I shrink from the responsibility of allowing Johnny to call me father.

Johnny's aggressive disposition was not more early developed than his duplicity. By the time he was two years of age, I had got the following maxim by heart: "Whenever J is particularly quiet, look out for squalls." He was sure to be in some mischief. And I must say there was a novelty, an unexpectedness, an ingenuity in his badness that constantly astonished me. The crimes he committed could be arranged alphabetically: He never repeated himself. His evil resources were inexhaustible. He never did the thing I expected he would. He never failed to do the thing I was unprepared for. I am not thinking so much of the time when he painted my writing-desk with raspberry jam, as of the occasion when he perpetrated an act of original cruelty on Mopsey, a favorite kitten in the household. We were sitting in the library. Johnny was playing in the front hall in view of the supernatural stillness that reigned, I remarked, suspiciously, "Johnny is very quiet, my dear." At that moment a series of pathetic mewings was heard in the entry, followed by a violent scratching on the oil-cloth. Then Mopsey bounded into the room with three empty spoons sticking upon her tail. The spoons were removed with great difficulty, especially the last one, which fitted remarkably tight. After that, Mopsey never saw a work-basket without arching her tortoise-shell back, and distending her tail to three times its natural thickness. Another child would have squeezed the kitten, or stuck a pin in it, or twisted her tail; but it was reserved for the superior genius of Johnny to string rather small spoons upon it. He never did the obvious thing.

It was this fertility and happiness, if I may say so, of invention, that prevented me from being entirely dejected over my son's behavior at this period. Sometimes the temptation to seize him and shake him was too strong for poor human nature. But I always regretted it afterwards. When I saw him asleep in his tiny bed, with one ear dried on his plump velvety cheek and two little mice-teeth visible through the parted lips, I couldn't help thinking what a little bit of a fellow he was, with his funny little fingers, and funny little nails; and it didn't seem to me that he was the sort of a person to be pitched into by a great strong man like me.

"When Johnny grows older," I used to say to his mother, "I'll reason with him." Now I don't know when Johnny will grow old enough to be reasoned with. When I reflect how hard it is to reason with wise grown-up people, if they happen to be unwilling to accept your view of matters, I am inclined to be very patient with Johnny, whose experience is rather limited, after all, though he is six years and a half old, and naturally wants to know why and wherefore. Somebody says something about the duty of "blind obedience." I can't expect Johnny to have more wisdom than Solomon, and to be more philosophic than the philosophers.

I freely confess that Johnny is now and then too much for me. I wish I could read him as cleverly as he reads me. He knows all my weak points; he sees right through me, and makes me feel that I am a helpless infant in his adroit hands. He has an argumentative, oracular air, when things have gone wrong, which always upsets my dignity. Yet how cunningly he uses his power! It is only in the last extremity that he crosses his legs, puts his hands into his trousers-pockets, and argues the case with me. One day last week he was very near coming to grief. By my directions, "kindling-wood and coal are placed every morning in the library grate, in order that I may have a fire the moment I return at night. Master Johnny must needs apply a lighted match to this arrangement early in the forenoon. The fire was not discovered until the blower was one mass of red-hot iron, and the wooden mantelpiece was smoking with the intense heat.

When I came home, Johnny was led from the store-room, where he had been imprisoned from an early period, and where he had employed himself in eating about two dollars' worth of preserved pears.

"Johnny," said I, in as severe a tone as one could use in addressing a person whose forehead glistened with syrup.—"Johnny, don't you remember that I have always told you never to meddle with matches?"

It was something delicious to see Johnny trying to remember. He cast one eye meditatively up to the ceiling, then he fixed it abstractedly on the canary-bird, then he rubbed his ruffled brows with a sticky hand; but really, for the life of him, he couldn't recall any injunctions concerning matches. "I can't, papa, truly, truly," said Johnny at length. "I guess I must have forgot it." "Well, Johnny, in order that you may not forget it in future—"

Here Johnny was seized with an idea. He interrupted me.

"I'll tell you what you do, papa,—you just put it down in writin'."

With the air of a man who had settled a question definitely, but at the same time is willing to listen politely to any crude suggestions that you may have to throw out, Johnny crossed his legs, and thrust his hands into those wonderful trousers-pockets. I turned my face aside, for I felt a certain weakness creeping into the corners of my mouth. I was lost. In an instant the little head, covered all over with yellow curls, was laid upon my knee, and Johnny was crying, "I am so very, very sorry!"

I have said that Johnny is the terror of the neighborhood. I think I have not done the young gentleman an injustice. If there is a window broken within the radius of two miles from our house, Johnny's ball, or a stone known to come from his dexterous hand, is almost certain to be found in the battered premises. I never hear the magical jingling of splintered glass, but my portemonnaie gives a convulsive throb in my breast-pocket. There is not a door step in our street that hasn't borne evidences in red chalk of his artistic ability; there isn't a bell that he hasn't rung and run away from at least three hundred times. Scarcely a day passes but he falls out of something, or over something, or into something. A ladder running up to the dizzy roof of an unfinished building is no more to be resisted by him than the back platform of a horse-car, when the conductor is collecting his fare in front.

I should not like to enumerate the battles that Johnny has fought during the past eight months. It is a physical impossibility, I should judge, for him to refuse a challenge. He picks his enemies out of all ranks of society. He has fought the ash-man's boy, the grocer's boy, the rich boys over the way, and any number of miscellaneous boys who chanced to stray into our street.

I am well aware that, socially speaking, Johnny is a Black Sheep. I know that I have brought him up badly, and that there is not an unmarried man or woman in the United States who wouldn't have brought him up very differently. It's a great pity that the only people who know how to manage children never have any! At the same time, Johnny is not a black sheep all over. He has some white spots. His sins—if wiser folks had no greater!—are the result of too much animal life. They belong to his evanescent youth, and will pass away; but his honesty, his generosity, his bravery, belong to his character, and are enduring qualities. The quickly crowding years will tame him. A good large pane of glass, or a seductive bell-knob, ceases in time to have attractions for the most reckless spirit. And I am quite confident that Johnny will be a great statesman, or a valorous soldier, or, at all events, a good citizen, after he has got over being A Young Desperado.—T. B. Aldrich in Atlantic Monthly.

HAVE PATIENCE WITH YOURSELF.

Thus we need, every one of us, to know that we live in moods and phases, working eccentrically, sometimes more unhinged and sometimes less; sometimes in better nature and sometimes irritable; sometimes more disposed to jealousy; sometimes more to conceit. Nothing looks fresh after a sleepless night; nothing tries after an over-heavy dinner. A touch of dyspepsia makes the soul barren and everything else barren to it—even the finest poem it turns to a desert. Any mood of gloom, in the same manner hangs a pall over the sun, and even the very bones will sometimes seem to be in that mood as truly as the eyes. Opinion is sometimes bilious, sensibility morbid and sore, and passion tempest-sprung, goes wild in all sorts of rampages. At one time we can be captious towards a friend, at another generous towards an enemy, at another about equally indifferent to both. Now a wise man is one who understands himself well enough to make due allowance for such unsane moods and varieties, never concluding that a thing is thus or thus, because just now it bears that look; waiting often to see what a sleep or a walk, or a cool revision, or perhaps a considerable turn of repentance will do. He does not slash upon a subject, or a man, from the point of a just now rising temper. He maintains a noble candor by waiting sometimes for a gentler spirit, and a better sense of truth. He is never intolerant of other men's judgments, because he is a little distrustful of his own. He restrains the dislikes of prejudice, because he has a prejudice against his dislikes. His resentments are softened by his condemnations of himself. His depressions do not crush him, because he has sometimes seen the sun, and believes it may appear again. He revises his opinions readily, because he has a right, he thinks, to better opinions, if he can find them. He holds fast sound opinions, lest his moodiness in change should take all truth away. And if his unsane thinking appears to be toppling him down the gulfs of skepticism, he recovers himself by just raising the question, whether a more sane way of thinking might not think differently. A man who is fully aware thus of his own distempered faculty, makes a life how different from one who acts as if he were infallible, and had nothing to do but just to let him-

self be pronounced! There is, in fact, no possibility of conducting a life successfully on that manner. If there be any truth that vitally concerns the morally right self-keeping and beauty of character, it is that which allows and makes room for the distempers of a practically unsane state; one that puts action by the side of correction, and keeps it in wisdom by keeping it in regulative company. Just to act out our unsanity is to make our life a muddle of incongruous, half-discerning states without either dignity or rest. There is no true serenity that does not come in the train of a wise, self-governing modesty.—Dr. Bushnell in Hours at Home.

BIBLE CLASSES OF YOUNG MEN.

One of the most important problems in connection with Sunday-school labor is, how to retain young men in the Bible classes, and keep them interested in Bible study. An English teacher, of large experience, says on this point:

It was a great failing, with many teachers, that they did not study the nature of the characters they had to deal with in their Sunday-school class. During the last ten years, more than two hundred and fifty young men had gathered round him. He could not say that they had all become Christians. The success it had pleased God to give him, was not owing to his being an abler man than others, but he believed it was from the fact of his having always recognized the great importance of studying each individual nature that came under his influence. There was a tender place in each, and it only required the teacher to find that out, and he could exercise a vast amount of influence over his scholar. When boys had arrived at the age of fourteen or fifteen, their young lives felt they were in the ocean of manhood. There was a time in the life of every young man, when his mind took a decided direction. Sometimes they would be under the influence of religious thought and feeling, at other times under the influence of passion; at other times the heart was fixed, and scientific taste would take possession of it. It was at this time that a young man became alive to the responsibility of his position, to the fact that he was an immortal being. It must, of necessity, be a critical time in the life of a young man or woman, for it was then that the mind debated as to whether it should serve God or mammon. If they wished to turn them to God, then was the time to do it. Just at that time, when the mind was bewildered at its own imaginations, and at the idea of its own existence, it was glad of something or somebody to say, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Though the husbandman beats his corn as if he were angry with it, yet he loves and highly prizes it, and though God strike and afflict his people, yet He sets a great value upon them; and it is equally absurd to infer God's hatred to His people from His afflicting them, as the husbandman's hatred of his corn because he thrashes and beats it.

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