THE BASKET OF PLUMS

TORONTO:
WILLIAM BRYCE, PUBLISHER.


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The Happy Family.

THE BASKET OF PLUMS.

FRED SLOCOMB the cobbler, usually called Bandy-legged Fred by the boys in the village where he dwelt, because his supporters were not quite as

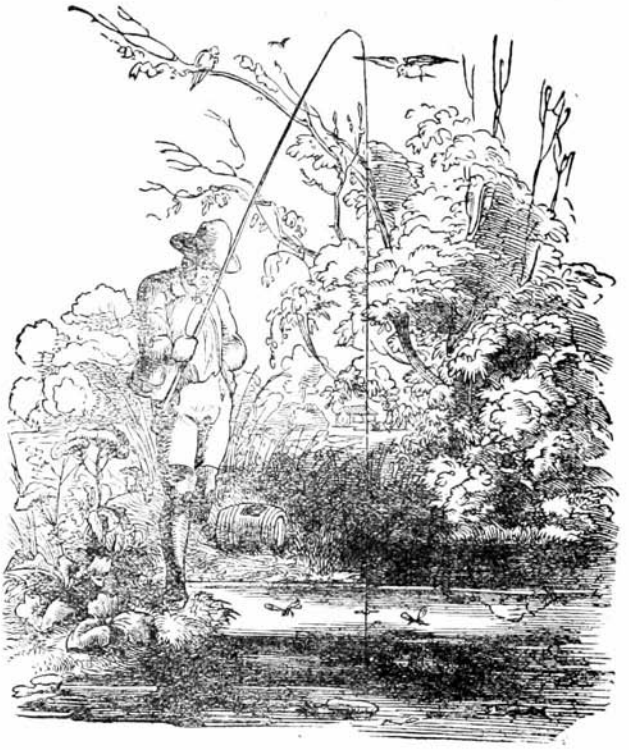
straight as those of most people, was the happiest mender of boots and shoes you would see on a summer's day. He had a wife—and a good wife she was too; a chubby baby, who was pronounced by competent judges to be the very image of Fred himself; and an old mother, who lived in his cottage with him and his wife, and to whom they were, both of them, as kind and loving as could be. Moreover, though rude people called Fred a cobbler, he was a maker as well as a mender of boots and shoes; and many a rich farmer and prosperous tradesman walked to market, or to church, on Fred's handiwork. As Fred knew his business thoroughly, and was honest and obliging, he had always plenty of work to do; and as his wants were not many, and his

family was small, he got on famously, and might be heard singing at his work all day long, the merriest man in all the village.

Now, as Fred was a rapid workman, as well as a good one, he had generally some time to spare when his work was done for the day; and, like a wise little man, instead of wasting his time and his money at the tavern, he devoted his leisure to working in his garden; and, let me tell you, a garden is generally one of the most grateful things in the world, in the way of rewarding any labour and skill spent upon it. Now, Fred was very fond of his garden, and worked in it, not by fits and starts, but regularly, and with great perseverance; and accordingly the garden gave him back plenty of flowers, and a good supply of vegetables and fruit; and

Fred and his Family.

in the summer-time, when the beds were blazing with flowers of various hues (and Fred was particularly fond of a good deep red and a fine bright yellow), and when the fruit was ripening on the boughs, it was a sight to behold, on a fine evening; and it was pleasant, too, to see Fred moving about among the flower-beds, lugging a huge watering-pot, and tending his flowers carefully, or working away among his carrots and turnips with spade, rake, and hoe, looking as hot and as happy as possible, his good-humoured red face shining with heat and jollity, as he stopped every now and then to explain to his wife how he intended to make some grand improvement, or to point out to her how well some favourite shrub or flower was coming on. It was a pleasant sight. And



so the tall grave gentleman seemed to think, who sometimes came with his fishing-rod for a day's fishing in the stream

that flowed close by the village, and which was full of great fat carp, and of red-finned roach, and pike with great broad greedy mouths, that snapped at the bait in a hungry manner. The grave gentleman, when he had finished his day's sport, and had packed up his rods and lines, used often to pause, basket in hand, at the fence that skirted Fred's garden. After a time, Fred took courage to invite the stranger to walk into the garden and look at the flowers, and in time the two got to be quite good friends; for the stranger seemed very fond of flowers, and would stand patiently listening by the hour while old Fred expatiated on the beauties of this or that flower, or explained the manner in which he had raised one or another of his trees. Especially there

was a plum tree, which had been planted many years before by Fred's father, and which was the pride of Fred's heart; and certainly it did bear very fine fruit. The stranger seemed to take great interest in the ripening of the fruit, and Fred promised himself the pleasure of presenting his gentleman friend with the first dish of plums that should be ripe.

But one day, early in the autumn, the stranger came into the garden, and told Fred that this was the last time they should meet for some time to come, for he said he was summoned away to a distance, and should have no more leisure for fishing or for quiet walks. He seemed really sorry at having to go, and at parting, put a piece of paper into the shoemaker's hand, and said,

"Here you will find my name and address. If ever you come my way, and like to pay me a visit, I shall be glad to see you."

And then he shook Fred's hand, and bade him farewell, and went away.

When Fred looked at the paper, he stood speechless with astonishment, for he found that his quiet friendly visitor was no other than the great and powerful Count to whom all the land belonged for miles around, but whom none of the villagers had ever known, because he lived in a fine castle many miles off, on another of his estates.

"He must have wished to enjoy himself in a quiet way," said Fred to himself, "and therefore did not make himself known to any one here; but who would

have thought that such a great nobleman should be so friendly, and take such interest in a poor man's garden?"

That autumn Master Fred was obliged to give up the pleasure he had promised himself, of presenting some of his plums to his friend; for the Count came no more to the village.

The winter and the spring brought plenty of work, and the good shoemaker was fully employed; but when the summer came round again, and the flowers were blooming in the garden, and the fruit was ripening on the trees, Fred missed the friend who had taken such interest in his garden, and the thought arose in his mind that he would carry a basket of plums, when they should be ripe, to the Count, and beg his acceptance of them.

From that day Fred watched his plum tree with jealous eyes. Never had the fruit been so plentiful or promised so well; and a happy man was he, when he was at last able to gather a basketful, and set forth on his way to the Count's castle, on an old horse which was lent him by a neighbour.

It was a long day's journey: though Fred had started with the early dawn, the sun had set before he rode up the hill on which the Count's castle was built. The Count, who was in bad health, and looked pale and worn, received his visitor in his bed-chamber. He seemed greatly pleased to see his humble friend, and accepted the plums very graciously, though he observed with a smile, that his physicians would not allow him either to eat fruit or to go

fishing that year. Master Fred the cobbler was lodged in a handsome room, and confided to the care of the groom of the chamber, who had special orders to make him comfortable in every way. The Count kept him for three days at the castle, and then dismissed him with many kind wishes, and with a present of ten gold pieces.

When Fred got home, he found himself quite a hero among his neighbours. They gathered round him, and made him tell them every particular of his visit, over and over again; and many remarks were made on his good fortune. Among the listeners was Master Henry the locksmith, a shrewd covetous man. So soon as Master Henry heard of the present of ten gold pieces that Fred had received, he

The good Father.

began casting about in his mind whether he too had not something which he might carry to the Count, in expectation of an equally liberal reward Now, there stood

The good Mother.

in his bed-chamber a certain casket of polished steel, which Henry himself had

made, and which he considered his masterpiece. Many an hour of anxious work had he bestowed upon this casket; and indeed it was a very handsome box, and did credit to the maker's ingenuity.

"I will carry this box to the Count, and present it to him," thought Henry. "If he has given Fred ten gold pieces for those rubbishing plums, he will give me fifty at least for my beautiful casket."

So, the very next day, off he set to the Count's castle.

But he had reckoned without his host. When he sent in his present, the Count was not a little surprised. He sent out word that he was too ill to see strangers, and that he did not know how he had merited so handsome a present at the hands of Master Henry, and that he must

Setting out on a Journey.

therefore decline the gift. But Henry would not be denied. He declared that he had seen the Count frequently walking

in neighbour Fred's garden, and had come out of respect for his many virtues, and humbly hoped his present would not be refused. Thus urged, the Count sent out a second message: he said that if Master Henry insisted on it, he would accept the gift, but that he wished to make some return; he therefore sent out a present which had been made to himself, but which his feeble health would not permit him to enjoy, and therefore he bestowed it upon worthy Master Henry. That he valued this gift would be proved by the fact that he had rewarded the bringer with ten pieces of gold. The servant who delivered this message, placed a covered basket in the locksmith's hand, and showed him out of the castle gate. The covetous schemer thought his reception somewhat

"He told everybody in the village."

odd, and half repented having undertaken the journey. Still he buoyed himself up with the hope of what the basket might contain. So soon as he was out of sight of the castle, he sat down by the wayside and opened the basket; and there

he found the very plums that Fred had carried to the Count a few days before! The best thing Henry could have done would have been to receive the rebuke in silence, and to profit by the lesson. But he was so angry, that he foolishly told everybody in the village, and complained of the manner in which he had been treated, whereùpon he was finely laughed at; and that was all the consolation he got.

Fanny and her Family.

LITTLE FANNY; OR, THE LOAF OF BREAD.

LITTLE FANNY was the child of poor but worthy parents, who lived in a large town where a great

trade was carried on. Fanny's father was a messenger, and earned his living by carrying letters and small parcels for merchants and shopkeepers. Every morning at eight o'clock, let the weather be wet or dry, cold or hot, there he was at his post in the market-place, ready for any job of work. He was known to be a very honest man, and one who could be trusted; therefore he found employment enough, and many valuable parcels and important letters were given to him to be delivered; and never was he known to loiter on the way or to neglect his business.

But one day, as he was hurrying along to deliver a letter, his foot slipped on the wet pavement, and he fell and broke his leg. He was carried to the hospital;

and there he was obliged to lie for many weeks, suffering great pain, and unable to move. But he said to his wife, and to Fanny and her brother Jacob, when they came to see him,

"You must not cry and lament, but be thankful that I am so well taken care of; and we must look forward to the time when I shall be able to come out and work for you again."

The cold winter had come, and the children's mother had dressed a number of little dolls, and used to sit in the market-place and sell them, to earn a little money while her husband was ill. But soon she herself fell sick, and was unable to sit at her little stall. Then Fanny and Jacob offered to take her place, and as Christmas was coming on,

The Children's Stall.

and many people were buying toys, they managed to sell a good many dolls, and for a time the family had something coming in to live upon, though it was but little. But when the cold weather came, they were badly off. The poor people had little money to spend in dolls, and for the richer ones there were fine shops and stalls, that could offer more than the poor little stall over which Fanny and her brother presided.

A day or two before Christmas, they had been sitting for hours at their post, and had sold nothing, when a kind-hearted gentleman came and told them that while the cold weather lasted they might come to his house every day at a certain hour, and they should receive a loaf of bread each. This gentleman was a rich mer-

chant, well known in the town for his goodness to the poor. Accordingly, next day Fanny and little Jacob went to the gentleman's house, and found there about thirty or forty poor children assembled. Presently a large basket of loaves was brought in by a servant, who told the children that each of them might take one. The young ones immediately crowded round the basket, and began to quarrel for the largest loaves. Fanny and Jacob, who modestly remained in the background, received the two smallest loaves; but, unlike the others, they went to the merchant, who was standing in a corner of the room, and thanked him for his kindness; whereupon he patted both their heads kindly, and asked their names and where they lived.

The two loaves of bread were very welcome to Fanny's and Jacob's mother, whose cupboard was almost empty. The following day the children went to the distribution again, and once more they came away contentedly with the two smallest loaves. But how great was the astonishment of their mother when, on cutting the smaller of the two, she found in it a number of silver pieces!

Fanny was immediately sent back with the silver pieces to the merchant; for her mother said they must have got into the bread by some mistake. But the kind merchant said,

"No; there is no mistake. I had these silver pieces put into the bread to reward you and your little brother for the modesty and contentment you showed yesterday.

"Than to quarrel and fight."

Your mother is an honest woman for sending the money back; but take it home to her, for it is your own, and remember that it is more blessed to take a small gift contentedly than to quarrel and fight for a larger one: a small loaf, thankfully received, does more good than a large one obtained with strife, even though no silver pieces should have been baked in it."

CAREFUL NELL.

"NELL, my own dear Nell! Now be a good Nell, and give me twopence," said little Alfred to his sister, with a most imploring look, as they were walking together through the fields on their way home; for Nell had been sent to buy some groceries in the next village,

and Alfred had insisted, as usual, upon going with her "for protection," as he said; to which end he had provided himself with a switch, which might have frightened a very small puppy dog, if the dog had happened to be of a cowardly disposition.

"Nell, my own dear Nell!" repeated the little fellow. "Now be a good Nell, and give me twopence."

"What do you want the twopence for?" was Nell's very natural question.

"Say you 'll give it me, and then I 'll tell you."

"Nay," said Nell, smiling; "you had better first tell me why you want it, and then I 'll tell you whether I can give it you or not."

"Oh, Nell, you always have money!"

persisted Alfred; "and I 'm sure you would not like to be so unkind as to refuse your brother."

"But still," Nell said, "first tell me what you want the money for."

"Well, then, if you *must* know," said Alfred, a little ungraciously, "we shall be going by Brown's the baker's directly. As we came past there on our way this morning, I noticed some turnovers—oh, such capital cherry turnovers!—in his window; and I know they 're only twopence each, and I want to buy one, for I 'm so hungry. So now you know what I want the twopence for, and I know you 're a good sister, and will let me have it."

"Oh! so you want twopence to buy pastry with, my little man?" said Nell,

laughing. "No, that won't do. If you are hungry, you can get Jane to give you a piece of bread and butter when we get home. For my part, I shall wait till dinner-time; and if I can do without cherry turnovers, you can manage to do without them too. I want my money for something more sensible than to spend it in that way."

"Then," cried Alfred, "you are a very stingy girl, and not a good sister at all! I should be ashamed to refuse any one a paltry twopence, if I had it to give away."

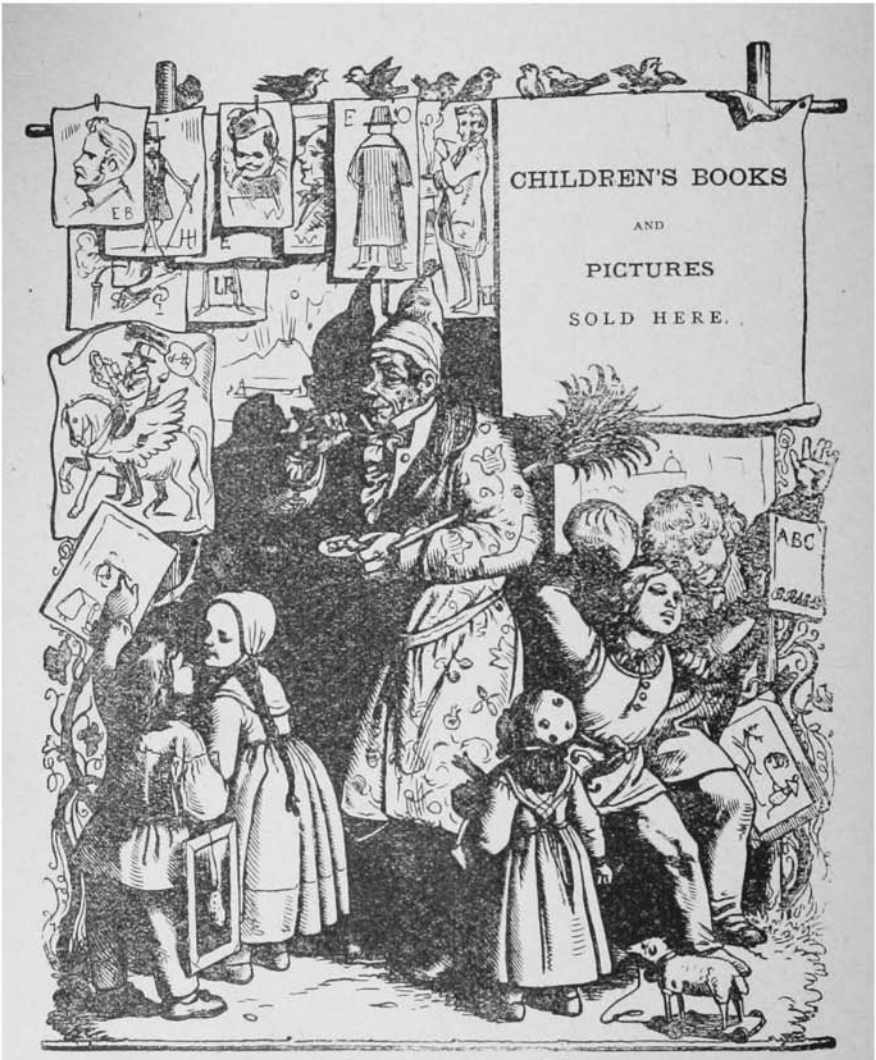
This was just Master Alfred's way when he was thwarted in anything. But his wrathful indignation seemed to have very little effect upon sober sister Nell, who only smiled, and advised the angry

little man to calm himself, and not to be in a passion about such a foolish thing as an unattainable cherry turnover.

After this, Alfred knew he would gain nothing by persisting; but he threw a

very indignant glance at his sister, and refused to give her another good-humoured word; and I am sorry to say that it was a little boy with a very ill-tempered face who reached home with her a quarter of an hour afterwards. He did not, however, neglect the hint Nell had given him, and a few minutes afterwards appeared in the garden, where he was to play with brother Phil till dinner-time, with a large piece of bread and butter in his hand, which he had procured from Jane, in accordance with Nell's advice. While he lay on his back on the grass, munching away at his bread and butter, he gave Phil a long account of what he called "Nell's stinginess;" but he could not help in his heart acknowledging the justice of a remark made by his little sister

Alice, who, after listening gravely, leaning her head on her little fat hands, to the story of Alfred's wrongs, said gravely to him,



A Booth at the Fair.

"After all, Alf, you seem to like the bread and butter very well; and when you have eaten it, it 's just as good as if you 'd had a cherry turnover; and I dare say Nell really wanted her money for something."

Alfred called her a stupid little thing, and asked her what she knew about it; but he felt in his heart that Ally was right.

A few days afterwards there was a fair in the village. When lessons were over, the children were allowed to go out and see the booths and stalls, where all kinds of playthings and sweetmeats and cakes were to be had; and the children's papa gave each of the young ones a sixpence to buy fairings with. So off they all went in high glee, quite ready to admire each pretty thing on the stalls, and happy in

the power of making purchases for themselves. Presently they met some little friends, bound, like themselves, to the fair, and the whole company went on their walk together. The little friends had also received some money for fairings, and a great consultation was held as to how the money should be spent.

"I mean to buy some gingerbread cakes and a cherry turnover," said Alfred.

"None of your stupid cakes for me!" cried Phil. "I mean to have a new ball and some string for my kite."

"I want a new doll," said Ally.

"And I shall look out for a humming-top," said one of the boys.

And thus each of the children fixed upon some intended purchase; but Nell said nothing.

"Well, Nell," cried her schoolfellow Emma, who was said to be a little too fond of teasing, "and what do you intend to buy with your money, for I am told you have plenty?"

"I don't know yet," answered Nell, simply. "I haven't seen anything I want, so far as we have gone."

"Oh, I understand: you'll keep the sixpence, and put it into the money-box with the rest!" cried Emma. "I'm ashamed of you, Nell! What a miser you are!"

"I'm not a miser, dear Emma," said Nell, gently. "But why should I buy a thing I don't want, or that I don't care for? What good would that do?"

"Oh, yes, we know all about that, sister,"

shouted Alfred, in whose mind the remembrance of the refusal to lend him twopence still lingered; and he added, ungenerously enough, "You see, you 've got the name of being a miser, and you 'll keep it all your life long. How do you do, Miss Miser?"

And all the rest seemed to think this nickname marvellously witty, and joined in a chorus of "How are you, Miss Miser? Glad to see you, Miss Miser!"

Nell bore all this teasing and ill nature without an angry word; but once, when the little folks were too hard upon her, she turned aside, and quietly wiped away a tear, which came into her eyes in spite of all she could do. Now, as there must be two sides to a quarrel, so the chief pleasure derived from teasing is the effect

it has upon the person tormented; and when the little people saw they could provoke quiet Nell to no retort, they soon ceased their taunting jests. Perhaps, too, they were a little ashamed when downright Phil called out that so many against one was not fair.

In the meantime the contemplated purchases were made, and the sixpences, which seemed to burn in the pockets of the children, were soon transferred to the custody of the stall-keepers. Alfred stuffed himself with his cherry turnover and with gingerbread to his heart's content, and got called "piggie" for his pains. Phil bought his kite, and Ally her doll, and in half an hour all the children's pockets were empty. Still they were not inclined to go home, and walked up and down the

long lane of booths and stalls, looking at the wonders of the fair, and enjoying them-

selves thoroughly. The last pence they possessed had been invested in the purchase of some red-cheeked apples, at the stall of a lively old woman at the top of the street. Presently they turned down a lane, and there, at the corner, sat a poor old man, whose looks at once excited their sympathy. He was dressed in a faded red soldier's jacket. He had a wooden leg, and, alas! his left hand too was gone, and the crippled arm hung across his breast in a sling. He was seated on a low stool, and before him, arranged on a flat tray, were some pretty little needle-cases and boxes, carved out of hard wood, with great patience and labour, by the old man himself. As the children drew near, he said, in a weak voice,

"My dear little ladies and gentlemen,

will you not buy a trifle of a poor old soldier? I am very hungry and wretched, and have sold nothing yet; will you not buy one of my little boxes? Look, you shall have the prettiest of them all for threepence. Pray buy something of me."

All the children's little hearts were filled with pity for the woes of the poor old man, and a dozen eager hands dived down into as many pockets, in search of pennies for him; but people cannot spend their money and have it too. The pockets all were empty, and the little spendthrifts turned away sorrowfully. But Nell came forward, and with a sweet smile offered the poor man the sixpence, for keeping which she had been obliged to hear so many jeering words. She put it into his hand and would have turned away; but

the old soldier, who thanked her over and over again, insisted that she should take two needle-cases for it, for he declared that so good-natured a young lady should not give her money for nothing, and that he wished to sell his wares, not to beg.

Then Nell turned to the other children, who began to see how unjust they had been; and she held out the prettiest of the two needle-cases, and offered it to Emma; whereat Emma, who was not a bad child at heart, felt so keenly the contrast between her own behaviour and Nell's, that she burst out crying, and with many tears acknowledged her fault.

The children turned towards home, rather thoughtful and silent. Presently little Alfred stole up to his sister, and held out both his hands to her.

"Forgive me, dear Nell," he said. "I have behaved very badly to you, and I am sorry for it. I will never call you stingy again."

Nell stooped down, and gave him two kisses. Then she said,

"No, dear Alfred, I am not stingy. But I try to be careful, and do not spend money uselessly. If I had wasted my sixpence, I could not have helped the poor old man. I promise you, that if ever you want money to buy anything useful, you shall have if I can give it you; but I don't think I ought to give it you to spend on cakes and sweetmeats, while there are so many poor people who want bread."

Alfred was silent; for he felt that Nell was right; and from that time forward

no one dared to call her Miser, though she was sometimes called Careful Nell, and her parents said she had no reason to be ashamed of the title.

THE LETTER; OR, DO IT AT ONCE.

"BERTHA, do not forget to take this letter to the post," said Mr. Charlesworth to his little daughter, as he took his hat and umbrella, and prepared to go to his office. "You pass the post-office as you go to school," he continued, "and mind you do not forget it, as you did the last time I gave you a letter to post for me; for I may as well tell you, that much depends on this letter being posted in proper time, and that you will be the greatest loser if you forget it, as usual."

"Don't be afraid, dear papa," cried

Bertha eagerly. "The post does not go out till ten o'clock, and it's not half-past eight yet. The letter shall be in the box before an hour has passed."

Mr. Charlesworth went his way, and presently Bertha started for school, with the letter in her pocket. At the corner of the street she met two of her school-fellows, who were going in the same direction. One of them, a girl named Annie Shute, had been taken to see some horse-riders perform in a circus the evening before. She was quite full of the wonders she had seen, and Bertha soon forgot everything in listening to Annie's account of the beautiful piebald and black-and-white horses, and the bold riders who sat them so gracefully. On the letter not another thought was bestowed.

Bertha went to school, and said her

lessons, and came home again when school-hours were over; and only when she saw her papa coming along the street towards the house did the thought suddenly strike her, like a sudden blow, that the letter was still in her pocket.

"Well, Bertha," said her papa, as soon as he came into the house, "of course you kept your promise, and posted the letter *at once*, this morning?"

Poor Bertha blushed scarlet, and was obliged to confess that, as usual, she had neglected the commission entrusted to her, and that the letter had not been posted at all. Mr. Charlesworth shook his head gravely and sorrowfully, and told Bertha to follow him into his room. The unhappy girl crept upstairs behind her father with bent head and weeping eyes,

for she expected to be severely reprimanded, and even punished, for she knew she had deserved both. But she was mistaken. To her surprise, her papa seemed not at all angry, but very sorry.

"Come here, my child," he said, "and bring me the letter you were to have taken to the post."

With a blush of shame, Bertha produced the unfortunate letter.

"Now read it to me," said Mr. Charlesworth.

Bertha broke open the letter accordingly, and found, to her utter humiliation, that it had been written entirely on her account. It was addressed to a relation of her papa's. Cousin John, as he was always called, lived some thirty miles off, in the country, and once, two years before, Bertha

had been for a month at his farm-house, on a visit to Cousin John and his children. She well remembered the beautiful fields and orchards, where she had been allowed to gather flowers and fruit to her heart's content, and the thousand country sights and objects which, familiar as they were to her little cousins, were to her, the town-bred child, a constant source of joy and marvel. And now, it seemed, Cousin John had offered to have her for another month, and her papa had written back to say that on the next day but one he should be able to bring his little daughter to within fifteen miles of Cousin John's house, and asked to have a chaise sent to a village he named, to meet her and take her the rest of the way. And now this unfortunate letter had


CHILDREN'S SPORTS.

The Letter.

not been posted, and Cousin John could not possibly get it in time, for her papa said he must start on his journey, which involved business of importance, on the day he had appointed, and there could be no chaise to meet Bertha, and her papa had not the time to take her all the way

himself; consequently, the journey must be given up. And this is what Mr. Charlesworth explained to poor weeping Bertha.

He said, "To-day is Thursday. In order that Cousin John might get the letter in time to send the chaise to meet us, the letter ought to have been posted early this morning. You have missed the post, and now it is too late. I am sorry you should, by your own fault, have deprived yourself of a great pleasure, but I can scarcely pity you. How many times, my dear Bertha, have I not spoken to you about your heedlessness, and exhorted you to cure yourself of this miserable fault? But my words were all thrown away, and seem to have gone in at one ear and out at the other, without producing the slightest

effect. So now you must suffer the punishment due to your fault. The summer will pass away without your being allowed

Prayer.

to visit Cousin John, and I only hope that this deprivation may work for your good; therefore, keep a watch upon yourself, try your utmost to put off this sad fault, and above all, do not forget, morn-

ing and evening, to seek for help where help may be had — by prayer to that Heavenly Father, without whose gracious help neither child nor man or woman can do anything that is good."

When he had said this, Mr. Charlesworth went away, and left Bertha in a very unhappy frame of mind. At first the thought came into her mind, "After all, papa might have told me this morning what was in the letter, and then I should not have forgotten to post it;" and a certain rebellious feeling mingled with her sorrow and shame. But presently came better thoughts, and she said to herself, "No; papa was quite right. It is I alone who am to blame." And she thereupon resolved to follow that kind papa's advice, and strive her utmost to overcome the

fault which had proved such a source of sorrow to them both; and especially she remembered her papa's wise counsel about seeking help in her weakness where help was always to be had. And with many tears she knelt down, and prayed to God to give her strength, for the sake of His dear Son, that she might be enabled to keep her good resolution.

From that day Bertha's conduct underwent a great and important change. She became somewhat quieter and less merry than she had been, and it was easy to see that the disappointment she had suffered had been great. But her heedlessness was gone. Whatever she had to do was done "at once," and Mr. Charlesworth remarked, with secret pleasure, that he could now entrust to Bertha matters of

Industry.

real importance, without any fear that they would be neglected or forgotten. She kept a strict watch on herself, and often, if she woke suddenly in the night, she

would sit up in her bed, and pray that she might be enabled to keep her good resolve; and after each prayer of this kind, she fell asleep, comforted and confirmed in her resolution.

Thus months passed away, and autumn had come to paint the leaves of the trees with tints of russet and gold, when one morning Mr. Charlesworth came to Bertha quite unexpectedly, and said,

"My child, prepare to start with me on a little journey to-morrow morning, and pack up clothes enough to last you for three or four weeks."

"Why, where are we going, dear papa?" asked Bertha, with a flush of joy on her face. "Do you mean to say you are going to take me——"

"To Cousin John's? Yes, my dear

Country Pleasures.

little daughter," replied Mr. Charlesworth, before Bertha could even finish her question, and a kind smile played about his mouth. "I was very sorry to have to punish you some months ago; but now I rejoice with my whole heart that I can

reward you for your good conduct, and for the way in which you have conquered your fault. You are my own dear little Bertha, and I have cause to rejoice over you!"

Bertha was a very affectionate child; and as she had lost her mamma when she was an infant, all her love had been concentrated on the kind parent who was left to her; therefore it may be imagined with what joy she received these words of well-earned praise. Her papa's approval rejoiced her more even than the prospect of the journey that was to be begun next day, and never did a child set out on a visit with a lighter heart than beat in Bertha's bosom, when she tripped into the chaise next morning, and seated herself by the side of her dear papa.

Mr. Charlesworth, to increase her pleasure, had arranged his affairs in such a manner that he was able to go the whole way with his daughter, and even to stay with her for the first three days at Cousin John's house. Whether he related the story of Bertha's trial and victory to that gentleman, or whether Bertha's thoughtfulness and promptitude spoke for itself, I cannot say; but certain it is that Cousin John paid very great attention to his little visitor, and did everything in his power to make her stay agreeable; and after a happy month in the country, Bertha went home more strengthened than ever in her good resolution, and firmly convinced that duty, to be done well, must be done "at once."