

Our Boys and Girls

THE TERMITE, OR WHITE ANT.

The little bits of ants, the kind with which we are familiar, and which insist on laying out their national highways across our pantry floor are smart little rascals, it is true, but as torments they are as nothing when compared with the white ants of Africa.

These ants live in vast republics, made up of four different kinds of individuals—queens, males, workmen, and soldiers. The male ants have wings; the others do not. Each division of the ant colony has its own particular business to attend to, and positively refuses to have anything to do with what may be the duty of another class. For instance, if a workman saw an enemy approaching, he would promptly pick up his tools and run. He knows that is what he is expected to do. On the other hand, a soldier would allow the queen, or anyone else, for that matter, to starve, before he would hand her a mouthful of food.

The queen's mission in life is to keep the egg supply up to the limit, and she attends to this with a singleness of purpose that would make a leghorn hen imagine she had missed her calling. The masculine section of the little nation includes the loafers and the kid-glove gentry.

The enormous, cone-shaped dwelling of the white ant has long been the wonder of travelers in the neighborhood of the Cape of Good Hope. A group of these pyramidal nests is often mistaken for an Indian village. The nests are from twelve to twenty feet in height, and look like so many overgrown sugar loaves scattered over the plain. The walls of the dwellings are so strong and thick that the wild cattle can clamber up on them as a lookout.

The interior chambers are sometimes so large that a dozen men could stand upright in one of them. The entrance to these tropical skyscrapers is underground; long shafts are sunk down into the earth, and numerous galleries branch off from them in every direction, coming to the surface at widely separated points. Ant houses are not all regularly constructed, but often are ornamented with what look like turrets or bell towers. When the time comes for replenishing the colony, the queens lay daily some eighty thousand eggs.

As fast as the eggs are deposited, they are seized by waiting workers, and carried to nurseries especially prepared for their reception. Here they are tenderly cared for until they hatch. The babies come into the world with the proverbial gold spoon in their mouths, and are pampered and stuffed with ant dainties until they are old enough to shift for themselves, and to take up their allotted work in the community. These ants do not run at random over the ground in search of food, but travel in covered ways that lead in every direction to the source of their food supply. They have been known to attack and devour birds and small animals, and when they are through with the carcass, there is nothing left but a skeleton, picked cleaner than an anatomist could have done the work. But the thing that puts these ants in the problem class, is their habit of invading human dwellings, and leaving ruin and desolation behind. Silently they build covered roads from their nest to the point to be attacked, and eat their way up from below, giving not an outward sign of their presence. They penetrate into every part of the wood-

work of the house, and eat out the interior, leaving only a thin, wafer-like surface. There is nothing to indicate their devastating presence, and from the appearance of things, one would not know that there was an ant in existence. A chair or a table looks just as it ought to look, but place your hand upon it, and it crumbles away under the touch like so much powder. Smeathman, who has left such a detailed account of the ravages of this pest, says it takes but a short time for them to destroy a house. A complete staircase has been eaten up in two weeks, and chairs and other furniture required much less time.

This writer says that he has known instances where one had left home for a short stay, and upon his return, found everything seemingly in perfect condition. The furniture retained its freshness and gloss, the woodwork about the house looked as it did when he left. But his lightest touch would break through the outer crust, revealing the fact that only the ghosts of chairs and tables remained.—Ex-change.

THE REASON.

Grandma Gruff said a curious thing,
"Boys may whistle, but girls must sing,"
That's the very thing I heard her say
To Kate, no longer than yesterday.

"Boys may whistle." Of course they may
If they pucker their lips the proper way;
But for the life of me I can't see
Why Kate can't whistle as well as me.

"Boys may whistle, but girls must sing!"
Now, I call that a singular thing.
If boys can whistle, why can't girls, too?
It's the easiest thing in the world to do.

So, if the boys can whistle and do it well,
Why cannot girls—will somebody tell?
Why can't they do what a boy can do?
That is the thing I should like to know.

I went to father and asked him why
Girls couldn't whistle as well as I.
And he said, "The reason that girls must sing
Is because a girl's a sing-ular thing."

And grandma laughed until I knew she'd ache
When I said I thought it all a mistake.
"Never mind, little man," I heard her say,
"They will make you whistle enough some day."
—New Orleans Picayune.

BY EXPERIENCE.

By Hilda Richmond.

"It doesn't seem to me that he is the sort of boy we want in our crowd," said Helen. "He is a good scholar, and all that, but somehow I don't want him. What do the rest of you say?"

The boys and girls of the neighborhood had formed a little circle for afternoon excursions to the woods with their Sabbath-school teacher, and now they were discussing whether the new boy, who had lived among them a few months, should be asked to join them in their next good time. It was only an informal little club, with no member older than fourteen, and none under eleven, but they had jolly times all the year round.

"What's that you're talking about?" asked Ben Tucker, who had been away for a week. "Of course, we'll take Ray in with us. It's a mean shame we didn't do it long ago."

"Look here, Ben. Last time we met you

were the very one who thought we ought not to ask him. Seems to me you're getting to be a turncoat," spoke up one of the boys.

"I know it," said Ben, "but I want to tell you I've had a week of being alone. You never saw such folks as live around Aunt Fanny's in all the days of your life. They looked me all over as if I were some sort of freak, and never once asked me to play with them. I don't know whether it was my clothes, or what, that made them so cool, but they simply ignored me."

"I suppose they treated you just as we have been treating Ray," said one of the girls. "I suppose the poor fellow has been lonely, but I never thought of it till just now."

"You just go away to a strange place for a week, and you'll think of it a great deal more," said Ben.

So Ray was voted in, and after he became well acquainted with his school-mates he told them that the past three months had been the longest he ever had spent. "You all seemed to have good times, and there was no place for me," said the poor boy. "If ever another new boy comes into this neighborhood, I'm going to try to be very nice to him, for I know how hard it is to be alone."

Did you ever think of that, you boys and girls who have your own little circle, and never open it to admit a stranger? Widen it a bit to receive the new boys and girls. May you never learn by experience what it is to be friendless and alone!—Ex.

Children's Letters

LEARNING THE CATECHISM.

Dear Presbyterian: I am a little girl ten years old. I am learning the child's catechism. I am nearly through with it. I go to Sunday-school every Sunday morning and afternoon, too. I enjoy the children's sermon and the letters. My sister takes your paper. My mother and father are dead. I have two sisters and three brothers. One of my sisters is at school and my brothers, too. I hope you will print my letter. I am in the fourth grade at school.

Your little unknown friend,
Dorothy Ward.

Dear Dorothy: I hope you will finish the catechism soon, so I can send you a certificate. Send me another letter before long. H. A.

TRIX AND BINGO.

Dear Presbyterian: I am a little girl ten years old. I go to school and am in the third grade. My teacher is Miss Beulah Obaugh. I love her dearly. I go to the Presbyterian Sunday-school. My teacher is Mrs. C. L. Brenaman. I have a dog that can sit up and "read" a paper. His name is Trix. I have a maltese cat named Bingo.

Your little friend,
Mt. Solon, Va. Hazel Wiseman.

Dear Hazel: These must be very interesting pets. Will Trix read our letters in the Presbyterian? Write me what he thinks of our page. H. A.

FROM GEORGIA.

Dear Presbyterian: Here comes a Georgia girl to join your happy band. I go to Sunday-school every day. I can and there are sixteen girls in my class. The ages are from thirteen years to fifteen years old. I will tell you the best story that you have printed. That is, "The Test of Allen Murray." How many of