

FIRES AND HOUSES AND SMILES.

If the world seems cold to you, Kindle fires to warm it!

If the world's a wilderness, Go! build houses in it!

If the world's a vale of tears, Smile till rainbows span it!

THAT BIG HORNETS' NEST.

By Mrs. Christine Stephens in Golden Days. It was in a little, weathered schoolhouse, far up on Penobscot river.

Bunches of fresh, odorous cedar-boughs stood upon the broad hearth, and a big shovel and long-legged tongs stood guard in opposite corners.

Upon one of the front benches sat Origen Dodson, in disgrace. He had not only broken the special rules of the school, but, as Jud Spears averred, "several of the commandments all to smash!"

What was still worse, he had been forbidden to eat his lunch till after that terrible rule was committed, and it was a most delicious, generous lunch too, as Origen knew, for he had seen kind Aunt Betsey put it up—white bread, well garnished with honey, an apple turnover, and two big doughnuts (twisters) fresh from the frying-pan.

It seemed to the hungry lad that the fragrant odor of those delectable "twisters" still lingered about his nostrils and sent such keen pangs of hunger to his empty stomach as only a healthy boy can feel.

An angry resentment and an inordinate desire for revenge surged through his wicked little heart as he sat sullenly repeating over and over the lines which he could not fix in his memory for the overpowering thoughts of his untasted dinner.

All the long afternoon he nursed his wrath, and when he was let out at night his plan of vengeance was well matured.

Origen, or Ode, as he was termed by his playmates, was eleven years of age. His parents were dead, and he had been shifted about from one unwilling relative to another till at last the poor-house had picked him up.

There he had stayed till he was ten, when kind-hearted Betsey Damon had taken him, out of pity. What wonder that the boy's heart was hardened, reared as the lad had been in an atmosphere of selfish grasping, finding out—through ill-usage and harsh, cold words—that his very presence was an annoyance, and that there seemed to be no place in the wide world for him?

All the generous, kindly sentiments of boy-nature had dried up under the burning drought of his loveless life.

It was a long time ere his obdurate little heart would respond to Miss Betsey's gentle manners toward him—for, said he to himself:

"She's only a-batin' of the game. Ah, my old daisy, you're a hoax, like all the rest of 'em—a pretty lean one, though!"

But her continued kind treatment had changed the lad wonderfully, and now only occasional "spells" of mutiny told of the turbulent spirit that was being subdued.

Something had stirred up his evil genius this bright day in August. Whether it was one of the periodical bubblings over of his vicious disposition, or the "dog days" weather, we are not prepared to say.

But here he was, stamping along toward Miss Betsey's, his brow lowered and full of moody wrinkles, and a wicked leer in his blue-gray eyes which was sad to see. His old felt hat was pulled far over his face, now red with heat and passion, and he muttered seditious things.

Miss Betsey was away to a new family in the neighborhood, but she had set out Origen's supper on the long pantry shelf.

He swallowed the savory meal hastily, after which he weeded in the garden, drove home the cow and milked her, and then, as Miss Betsey did not make her appearance, he started off toward a swampy tract, where there were a great many choke-cherry trees, full of ripening fruit.

Here was his place of favorite resort, and a few days previous he had discovered a black hornets' nest—a prodigious thing, nearly as large as a water-pail.

As he came in sight of the venom-filled nest, a gleam of malicious mischief shone in his eyes. "I reckon that'll 'bout square 'counts with her!" muttered the lad, as he approached the tree whereon hung the great gray tent. "I s'pose I'll hev to wait for 'em to go to roost," he added.

The hornets were not yet all in. Some were crawling on the nest and others humming about the tree.

Origen sat down quietly on a stone, picking little pieces from his ragged felt hat and rolling them into a wad, to wait for the hornets to "go to roost," which they shortly did.

He then went cautiously up to the tree and deftly inserted the wad into the aperture at the bottom of the nest.

"Ah, buzz away, my black dabsters!" shouted Ode, as the hornets set up a great commotion inside. "Ye can't get out!"

Origen then cut the limb from the tree and

carried it, with the nest attached, very circum-spectly home, and secreted it behind the log-fence back of the house. He did not care that Miss Betsey should discover it.

The next morning he prepared for school rather early, and for fear that Miss Betsey should suspect anything wrong, he "jumped" the sober old clock along a good half-hour, while the old lady was in the cellar skimming the milk.

He did not go the road to the school-house, but sneaked about, through the fields and pastures, to escape observation. And what wonder? He carried the choke-cherry limb along with him!

On coming near the school-house, he laid down the buzzing nest and cautiously reconnoitered the vicinity for other "early boys," but all was silent about the rude little building save the harsh, warm chir-r-r-r of the harvest-fly and the sharp scoldings of a red squirrel, as he sat upon the fence and scrutinized the lad fearlessly, as though he were aware of his cruel purpose.

The soft, warm breeze stirred the leaves gently, and the sun shone bright into the opening upon the yellow golden rod and purple daisies, making the little yard all aglow with rich color; and as Ode turned the corner suddenly, a flock of yellow birds arose from a bed of fuzzy thistles and flitted away through the tall weeds. But neither the soft wind, bright sun nor rich color could touch his better nature, which lay deep down in the mutinous little heart, just now submerged with thoughts of revenge.

Ode went into the little entry, then lifted the wooden latch and peered into the school-room, and being satisfied, he ran out and brought in the hornets' nest, swinging the door to after him, that no prying eyes should observe his movements unknown to him.

Placing the big nest in the darkest corner of the desk, he removed the wad; but now no angry insects came forth or gave sign of life.

He was afraid he had smothered them, and gave the nest a slight tap, but still all was quiet. Impatient, and fearful of the arrival of some one, he rapped earnestly upon the resounding one and shook it.

Ah! then there was a mighty pouring forth. He had severed the nest from the limb, tearing a large hole in its top. The angry hornets, which had seemed so dormant, now came out in a black cloud, ready for fight to the death.

In a moment, and before Ode could get down from the high desk, a big fellow had stung him upon the lips and another upon the hand. He struck out furiously among them and made for the door.

But here he stopped and stared in horror—scarcely noticing the stings which were dealt him right and left. The door was fast, and Ode was a prisoner with his terrible foes.

He now remembered that he had broken the latch-spring the previous morning, in a scuffle with one of the boys, and the teacher had promised to bring another that morning.

The full peril of his situation burst upon the boy, and, frantic with pain and terror, he fled about the room, now crawling under the benches, now racing over them, beating the air and howling fearfully.

All in vain, the enraged insects set upon him with greater energy at every blow. His cries for help rang out with maddened pain, as he dashed from corner to corner to evade the tiny yet powerful creatures.

"Oh, they're killing me! Save me—save me, somebody!" shrieked Ode, falling in a heap beside the door, and shaking it with all his might.

But it held fast. The maddened boy leaped to his feet, and again made a circuit of the room. All at once, he thought of the chimney, and, knocking aside the boughs, he dashed into its capacious throat, and scrambled and worked his way up into it amidst suffocating and blinding clouds of soot and ashes.

He thought he might climb out upon the low roof and escape to the bushes, but at that moment voices sounded outside, and then several boys rushed eagerly into the room.

They were met promptly by Origen's late tormentors, and the astonished lads beat a hasty retreat, giving vent to various expressions of feeling in epithets more pithy than choice.

The newcomers held a hasty consultation behind the bull-thistles, then emerged and again entered the room with bushes in hand, and fought valiantly for possession several minutes, but were completely routed—the hornets following them out in an angry cloud.

About this time some girls came in sight, but were advised to "keep shady"—which they accordingly did by retiring to the bushes.

Meanwhile, more boys appeared, and, after another consultation, each provided himself with a torch of birch-bark, peeled from the huge sticks of fire-wood in the yard, in one hand and a good switch in the other.

They again sallied into the room. A good many times it was doubtful which would hold the house; but at last, by dint of smoke and fire, the hornets were beaten and singed from the field, though a few still buzzed about the yard.

Now the timid girls ventured near, and the teacher appearing, the matter was exhaustively discussed, and many were the uncomplimentary epithets applied to whoever had "cut the mean caper."

In the meantime, Ode clung to the rough stones and listened attentively. It was a most uncomfortable situation, and his numerous stings were torturing. He felt that if he stayed there he must soon drop, and he began cautiously scrambling up the side of the chimney.

Suddenly the bustle below was hushed, and the voice of the teacher reading a chapter in Job came in a muffled monotone up to suffering Origen. He could sympathize heartily with the much-afflicted old patriarch.

But just then there was a slight disturbance beneath his jean jacket, then a buzz—and stab!

With a yell of pain, Origen let go, and clutched at his waistband. The next moment he came tumbling like a bomb down upon the hearth, in a perfect cloud of ashes and soot.

To say that the scholars were alarmed, mildly expresses their state of consternation. Some of the girls went nearly into hysterics, and all the little ones ran whimpering behind the teacher.

"It's Ode! It's Ode Dodson!" cried one of the oldest boys, after eyeing the soot-grimed object critically from a far corner.

And "Ode Dodson! Ode Dodson!" was echoed from all parts of the school-room.

The secret was out. Poor, unhappy Ode Dodson! His rebellious heart was completely subdued; and as he crouched there on the hearth, the picture of abject calamity, sobbing out his misery and shame, not a scholar but felt a great compassion for the wretched little lad, though more than one boy was yet suffering from the recent sharp encounter.

Indeed, he was an object of commiseration. His nose might, for size, have properly belonged to the giant Chang; one cheek stuck out as though he had had the toothache for a month, and both eyes were nearly closed. Numerous "bunches" blotched his hands and feet, while half his toes were swollen to bursting. His face was streaked with smut, and his clothes and hair were filled with soot and ashes.

It was some moments ere the confusion subsided; then Origen was drawn forth from the cedar-boughs.

"An' you ain't a-goin' ter lick me?" queried the lad, in amazement, as the teacher kindly bound up his wounds with fresh, wet earth. "Oh, ma'am, I'm the meanest boy out o' jail!" he cried, brokenly.

"My lad, you have been severely chastised already, and I have no desire to add to your sufferings. Learn to restrain your unfortunate disposition, and thank heaven that it is no worse with you," said the teacher, with a shudder. "But now you must go home to Miss Betsey."

Doubtless the stout jean jacket and trousers and slouched felt hat had saved his life; as it was, several days passed before he was able to be out again.

I have no need to add that whenever Origen felt inclined to indulge in revenge or spiteful mischief—for it was a long time before he wholly conquered this propensity—the thoughts of that big hornets' nest proved a wholesome restraint.

PLEASANT PASTIMES.

Children and others interested in such things as puzzles are invited to try their wit at making what has been called "the progressive sentence." In this pastime the first word must contain one letter, the second word two letters, the third word three letters, and so on just as far as the paragraph goes. Here are some specimen sentences:

I do not know where Joseph intends spending Christmas.

I go and fish where Jemima fainted, although unwilling afterwards, considering relationship.

I do not envy other women's chances; patience overcomes difficulty exaggerated thousandfold.

I do not like anger; vented passion destroys affection, diminishes self-respect, disorganizes collegueship; unconscionable mischiefousness! I, an old, hard cynic, detect amongst mankind's vanishing attributes punctuality, intelligence, determination, charitableness, unobtrusiveness, light-heartedness, conscientiousness, irreproachableness, straightforwardness, anti-hypochondriacism.

I am now just about buying several advanced treatises concerning agriculture, paleontology, echinodermata, electrobiology, arterialization, anti-Christianism, valetudinarianism, anthropomorphism, antimarchalism, philoprogenitiveness, anticonstitutionalism.

TO BE READ BACKWARDS OR FORWARDS

Emily reads a number of sentences that no doubt will afford amusement. Whichever way they may be read—backwards or forwards—they tell the same story and convey the same sense. The only defects is the one beginning "E. Morton," where the ants are troublesome:

- 1. Selime's eye smiles.
2. Cain a monomaniac.
3. Wyll of Warsaw's reign at Angiers was raw folly.
4. O. C. Cabot sleeps in Ned's tub, but S. Dennis peels tobacco.
5. A coup d'etat saved Mr. Otsdam, as a mad storm devastated Puoca.
6. E. Morton, Artemus Rof and Delia sailed, and for Sumatra, not Rome.

TANGLED VERSE.

If the following bit of verse be read in a certain way the sense will be the opposite of what now appears:

- 1. A rich young bachelor should strive
2. To win a poor but comely bride;
3. To gain a rich wife, would he thrive.
4. Let the unmarried man decide.
5. So, too, should John be six feet high,
6. He seeks a spouse four feet or less;
7. A stately dame to find he'll try.
8. Who's short and stout—his home to bless.

OUR ICE-CREAM.

BY JIMMY BROWN.

After that trouble with Aunt Eliza—the time she staid up on the roof and was rained on—I had no misfortunes for nearly a week. Aunt Eliza went home as soon as she was well dried, and father said that he was glad she was gone, for she talked so much all the time that he couldn't hear himself think, though I don't believe he ever did hear himself think. I tried it once. I sat down where it was real still, and thought just as regular and steady as I could; but I couldn't hear the least sound. I suppose our brains are so well oiled that they don't creak at all when we use them. However, Mr. Travers told me of a boy he knew when he was a boy. His name was Ananias G. Smith, and he would run round all day without any hat on, and his hair cut very short, and the sun kept beating on his head all day, and gradually his brains dried so that whenever he tried to think, they would rattle and creak like a wheelbarrow wheel when it hasn't any grease on it. Of course his parents felt dreadfully, for he couldn't go to school without disturbing everybody as soon as he began to think about his lessons, and he couldn't stay home and think without keeping the baby awake.

As I was saying, there was pretty nearly a whole week that I kept out of trouble; but it didn't last. Boys are born to fly upward like the sparks that trouble, and yesterday I was "up to mischief again," as Sue said, though I never had the least idea of doing any mischief. How should an innocent boy, who might easily have been an orphan had things happened in that way, know

all about cooking and chemistry and such, I should like to know.

It was really Sue's fault. Nothing would do but she must give a party, and of course she must have ice-cream. Now the ice-cream that our cake-shop man makes isn't good enough for her, so she got father to buy an ice-cream freezer, and said she would make the ice-cream herself. I was to help her, and she sent me to the store to order some salt. I asked her what she wanted of salt, and she said that you couldn't freeze ice-cream without plenty of salt, and that it was almost as necessary as ice.

I went to the store and ordered the salt, and then had a game or two of ball with the boys, and didn't get home till late in the afternoon. There was Sue freezing the ice-cream, and suffering dreadfully, so she said. She had to go and dress right away, and told me to keep turning the ice-cream freezer till it froze and don't run off and leave me to do everything again you good-for-nothing boy I wonder how you can do it.

I turned that freezer for ever so long, but nothing would freeze; so I made up my mind that it wanted more salt. I didn't want to disturb anybody, so I quietly went into the kitchen and got the salt-cellar, and emptied it into the ice-cream. It began to freeze right away; but I tasted it, and it was awfully salt, so I got the jug of golden syrup and poured about a pint into the ice-cream, and when it was done it was a beautiful straw-color.

But there was an awful scene when the party tried to eat that ice-cream. Sue handed it round, and said to everybody, "This is my ice-cream, and you must be sure to like it." The first one she gave it to was Dr. Porter. He is dreadfully fond of ice-cream, and he smiled such a big smile, and said he was sure it was delightful, and took a whole spoonful. Then he jumped up as if something had bit him, and went out of the door in two jumps, and we didn't see him again. Then three more men tasted their ice-cream, and jumped up, and ran after the doctor, and two girls said, "Oh my!" and held their handkerchiefs over their faces, and turned just as pale. And then everybody else put their ice-cream down on the table, and said thank you they guessed they wouldn't take any. The party was regularly spoiled, and when I tasted the ice-cream I didn't wonder. It was worse than the best kind of strong medicine.

Sue was in a dreadful state of mind, and when the party had gone home—all but one man, who lay under the apple-tree all night and groaned like he was dying, only we thought it was cats—she made me tell her all about the salt and the golden syrup. She wouldn't believe that I had tried to do my best, and didn't mean any harm. Father took her part, and said I ought to eat some of the ice-cream, since I made it; but I said I'd rather go up stairs with him. So I went.

Some of these days people will begin to understand that they are just wasting and throwing away a boy who always tries to do his best, and perhaps they'll be sorry when it is too late.—Harper's Young People.

CARRYING HIS SKELETON OUTSIDE.

The tortoise has not accomplished the feat of taking off its flesh and sitting in its bones, but it has done the next thing to it. It is the first example of a skeleton brought to the surface; the back is incapable of movement, and the scales with which a less ambitious reptile is content have developed into the horny shield which covers it, while the bones of the breast have developed into a box capable of containing the creature, head and legs and all. In fact, if we belonged to a past generation when inane plays upon words were taken for wit, we should have most probably said that the chest of the tortoise is a box to hold its trunk. The horny integument of the Schild-kroete, "shield-toad," as our Teutonic brethren so graphically call him, is scarcely less rich in associations than his family name, suggesting, among a crowd of other memories, the high tortoise-shell combs, short waists, whisk and pump-room manners of the beauties of the Regency. The arrangement for wearing the skeleton outside, and packing the whole body away in the case formed by it, is convenient, but not an absolute protection against foes. The lithe and wily panther, for instance, has a habit of inserting his paw into the opening left for the protrusion of the head, and thus extracting the animal. The turtle, moreover, is at a disadvantage when turned over on his back, which is a favorite method of securing those which come ashore to lay their eggs. Against ordinary dangers the thick shield is a very useful safeguard; but the impossibility of receiving any impression through the skin of the body must have its disadvantages, too. How, for instance, does a tortoise manage in those cases which a cow provides against by rubbing a post? Supposing it to be possible for him to suffer from any such inconvenience, he would be even worse off than a mediæval knight armed cap-a-pie, beneath whose steel panoply a specimen of the domestic pulce had secreted itself.—The Saturday Review.

GOOD ADVICE.

"I've written a new play," said an æsthetic young Philadelphian last week, addressing a lady noted for her wit and beauty. "Indeed; and what is its title?" she asked. "Before the Dawn," said he. "Keep it dark," was her witty and crushing rejoinder.—Philadelphia News.

FOR OTHERS' SAKE.

'Tis happiness to love our work For its own sake. And could we always, none would shirk, Or dread to wake. But life is long, and we may cease To love our tasks; Illusions pass, the sober days Throw off their masks. They from us with averted eyes And faded bloom; The spirit quails and almost dies Before their gloom. Ah! then we learn work has no worth For its own sake, And sordid are all tasks of earth Till love partake. For truly only love our lives Can worthy make, And he is happiest who most strives For others' sake.

FARM AND GARDEN.

NORWAY SPRUCE FOR WINDBREAKS.—One of the best trees for a windbreak is the Norway spruce. It is one of the hardiest of evergreens, and growing easily from seeds. Nurserymen propagate it to a great extent, and sell the plants very cheap. Nice plants, 2 feet high can be had at a cost of about \$12 per hundred, from almost any large nursery. Evergreens do very well planted in early autumn. The roots become a little active before winter, making the task of going through the winter easy, and the plant is in a good condition to go through the heat of summer. The hardy character of the Norway makes it the most sought for for planting for screens in the winter. The north side of exposed farm buildings should have these trees planted there at once—not too near, or it makes the place too much shut up in summer. Thirty feet is near enough to the buildings. The comfort all animals would derive from such trees in winter time would prove very much to the profit of the owner.

THE SHROPSHIRE SHEEP.—The development of great industries in iron and coal in the districts of Shropshire, at the beginning of the century, gave rise to a large and increasing demand for mutton. To meet this demand, the farmers of that part of the country turned their attention to the raising of mutton sheep. Breeding ewes were sought for from the midland and southern counties, and in time Shropshire became not only a leading sheep-raising region, but also the home of an important breed, the parentage of which it is difficult to state, for the reason that it is derived from and combines a number of the best mutton breeds. The Shropshire is more strictly speaking a cross-breed, in which the "natives" of the districts, the Cotswold, and later the Leicester and Southdown have been combined. On account of this complex admixture of blood, the Shropshire breed is one that varies somewhat in character. The original sheep was horned, black or brown-faced, hardy and free from disease, producing forty-four to fifty-six pounds of mutton to a carcass, and a fleece of two pounds of moderately fine wool. The present Shropshires are without horns, the legs and face dark or spotted with gray, the neck thick, the head well shaped, ears neat, breast broad, back straight, barrel round, and the legs strong. They are easy keepers, hardy, fatten quickly, and at the age of two years give 100 to 120 pounds of excellent flesh. The fleece is longer, heavier, averaging seven pounds, and more glossy than that of the Southdown. The Shropshire is a valuable sheep for American farmers.—Dr. Byron D. Halsted, in American Agriculturist for November.

THINGS TO MAKE A NOTE OF.

FEATHER CAKE.—One cup sugar, one cup milk, one tablespoonful butter, one egg, two and one-half cups flour, two teaspoonfuls cream tartar, one teaspoonful soda. Flavor to taste with nutmeg or lemon.

A QUICK PUDDING.—Split a few crackers, lay the surface over with raisins, and place the halves together again; tie them closely in a cloth, and boil fifteen minutes in milk and water. With a rich sauce it is excellent.

FRENCH CAKE.—Five tumblers sifted flour, three of white sugar, one-half tumbler butter, one tumbler milk, one teaspoon soda dissolved in a little water; mix well, beat three eggs, yolks and whites beaten separate, one teaspoon nutmeg; beat all well for ten minutes. Bake in a moderate oven.

RIZ A LA TURQUE.—Put into a saucepan six cupfuls of stock or broth into which you have previously dissolved a good allowance either of tomato paste, French tomato paste, or the pulp of fresh tomatoes passed through a sieve; pepper and salt according to taste. When it boils throw in, for every cupful of stock, half a cupful of fine rice, well washed and dried before the fire. Let the whole remain on the fire until the rice has absorbed all the stock, then melt a goodly piece of butter, and pour it over the rice. At the time of serving, and not before, stir lightly to separate the grains; but do this off the fire.

A STRONG AND HANDY CEMENT.—One of the strongest cements, and very readily made, is obtained when equal quantities of gutta percha and shellac are melted together and well stirred. This is best done in an iron capsule placed on a sand bath, and heated either over a gas furnace or on top of a stove. It is a combination possessing both hardness and toughness, qualities that make it particularly desirable in mending crockery. When this cement is used the articles to be mended should be warmed to about the melting point of the mixture, and then retained in proper position until cold, when they are ready for use.

TO CURE CORNS.—Soak the foot for one-half hour in a solution of soda, and pare the corns as closely as possible; then apply a plaster of the following ingredients: Take of purified ammonia and yellow wax each two ounces and acetate of copper six drachms; melt the first two ingredients together, and after removing them from the fire add the acetate of copper just as they grow cold; spread the ointment on a piece of soft leather or linen and place it on the corn, removing it in two weeks.

MR. DANA ON WASHING BABIES.

Mothers and nurses cannot be too careful about the soap they use on the little ones. Few but physicians know how many of the so-called skin diseases among children are caused by the use of adulterated, poisonous soap. An analysis of several cakes of the pretty and perfumed toilet soaps that are sold on the streets showed the presence of ground glass, soluble glass, silex, pipeclay, rotten stone, borax, plaster of Paris, tin crystal, magnesia, pumice stone, oatmeal, and other substances, which are added to give the soap weight, hardness, toughness, or clearness. The common colorings are vermilion, Venetian red and carmine, ultramarine green, pot-pigment green, coppers, Spanish brown, ultramarine blues, yellow and scarlet anilines, and burnt umber. Many of the perfuming ingredients, though harmless in themselves, become chemically poisonous by admixture. Adding the dangers from all these to the rancid, diseased, putrid qualities of grease used, and mothers may well be appalled at the permanent evils these neat-looking, delicately-scented blocks of toilet soap contain, ready to be released whenever moistened and applied to the baby's body.—New York Sun.