SELECT READING FOR THE FAMILY.

GLEANINGS BY THE WAYSIDE.

TWO HEROES.

Forth went galloping, swift and straight
Soldiers twain from the city gate;

Bearing a message to their King,
Through the foemen beleaguering.

To their King in his peril sore
Tidings of faith and aid they bore.

Spake their chieftain: "Be swift and bold,
It is a nation's fate ye hold.

"It is a kingdom's hope ye bear.
Speed, speed on, lest the King despair."

On they rode till declined the sun;
Now the journey was three parts done.

All the desert seemed lone and drear,
Yet they knew that the foe crouched near.
On they rode with never a word—
Hark! but what in yon thicket stirred?

Hark! what hurtled the still air through?
Whir of an arrow 'twixt the two.

Arrow on arrow pointed well—
From his saddle the foremost fell.
Then the second his charger stayed,
And had sprung to his comrade's aid.

But he rose in his agony,
And he cried with a bitter cry:

"If thou lightest or drawest near,
In thy false heart I'll sheathe my spear!

"Art thou comrade of mine indeed?
On, ride on, for the King hath need!

On, ride on, lest I die in vain!
Be thou swift with the speed of twain!"

He whispered the steed a word he knew—
Forth through the showering shafts they flew.

On they sped as the swallows flee,
Till they had left the enemy.

Came the nightfall—no rest he craved,
Riding on till the King was saved.

Spake the King in his citadel:
"Soldier mine, thou has ridden well.

"At the dawn had the flag gone down;
And thy riding hath saved my crown!

"What is thy guerdon, soldier bold?"
"Sire, my guerdon I have and hold.

"Yet one bounty I would entreat—
Let me lie at my comrade's feet.

"Swift was I with the speed of two—
I the traitor and he the true."

* * * * * *

Far away in the desert wide,
There together the comrades bide.

Faithful soldiers in every deed,
They shall waken when God hath need.

They shall waken, nor soon, nor late,
They shall enter the city gate.

—*Henry Norman.*

* * *

LEAVES FROM THE DEAD.

St. Macarius the elder was once applied to by a young man for advice. He directed him to go to a burying ground and upbraid the dead. On his return the Saint said to him: "Well, what did the dead answer thee?" The young disciple smiled and said: "Nothing, Father, of course." Then the Saint told him: "Go back now and praise the dead." On his return the Saint again asked: "Well, what answer did the dead make to thy flattery?" And the young man answered again: "Father, none at all; they were silent, as before." "Then," replied Macarius, "learn from the dead never to be moved either by men's reproaches or their praises. If thou diest to the world and to thyself thou wilt begin to live to Christ."

* * *

WHICH?

My life is like unto a sheltered stream.
Whose pleasant waters in the sunlight gleam:
A murmuring shallow, with its ripples, here;
A limpid pool, with crystal depths, is there.
Beneath are polished rocks, and sands like snow;
To right and left, the verdant meadows show;
And, high o'er all, a glorious azure sky,
With clouds, like white-winged ships, slow sailing by.

My life is like a dark and stormy sea,
O'er which the rude gales sweep eternally;
And as each furious blast speeds on its path,
It whips and tears her bosom in its wrath:
Her toppling waves roll fast and far in flight,
Like steeds set loose and driven mad by fright;
and Heaven's vault, elsewhere serene and blue,
By inky clouds, is hidden here from view.

—*Frank McGleln.*

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A YOUNG MAN'S THANKSGIVING.

"You went to Mass every morning for a month when you were looking for work, James," said a good mother. "You went with your petitions, but have you heard a Mass in thanksgiving for your fine position?"

"Well, you know, mother, I've been very busy, and some way I forgot after a while," James tried to explain.

"You are one of the nine who forgot to thank their God for His goodness to them!" replied the mother. "Their prayer was granted, and that was all they cared. No time to thank God. Make time, my son."

The next morning James made his tardy thanksgiving. He would not be one of the nine, he said, but he was just heedless until reminded of his duty. How many are like him! We are all earnest in prayer for our needs, for temporal favors, and yet how remiss we are in making fitting acknowledgment.

* * *

THE OLD STORY.

"Tomorrow," he promised his conscience, "tomorrow, I mean to be good;
Tomorrow I'll think as I ought to; tomorrow I'll do as I should;
Tomorrow I'll conquer the habits that hold me from heaven away."
But ever his conscience repeated one word, and one only, "Today."
Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, thus day after day went on;
Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow—till youth like a vision was gone;
Till age and his passion had written the message of fate on his brow,
And forth from the shadows came Death, with the pitiless syllable, "Now."

—*Dennis A. McCarthy.*

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR.

A GREAT HEART.

It was the day before Easter several years ago, about three o'clock in the afternoon. In the great department store I found my way to the counter where ribbon novelties were for sale. It had been a hard day for the salesgirls, and they showed signs of weariness. The one who turned to me attracted attention instantly, for everything about her was pleasing. Her figure was round and chubby, her pink-and-white face was round like that of a doll. Her big blue eyes were round, and her hair was a bright, light golden shade. Behind the counter, with her elbows resting upon it, she reminded one of the fat little cherubs we see in pictures.

Something aroused her interest, and she gave such a childishly gleeful laugh that it was hard to believe her a nearly grown young woman behind a counter. "Oh, see, isn't it sweet!" she cried. I smiled into her face. "You infant," I said. Instantly the little figure was drawn up with dignity, and she said, solemnly, but with smiles in her eyes, "Why, I am seventeen and a half years old." But in my heart, I always called her the "girl with the childish face." I liked her. There was a stool just around the corner from her department where one might sit and rest, and watch her as she worked.

My friends found my devotion to the girl amusing. "Such a childish face," they would say. "There is no strength, no character in it."

"I do not agree with you there," I always answered. "Her face is babyish, but kind—and there's something clear and honest in her eyes."

Already I called her to myself, Greatheart with a baby face," for I found in her such strength, such courage, such sweetness, that I have always wished for a pen that might do her justice!

"Did you get the dress, Carrie?" I heard her ask another girl, working near her. This, too, was on a busy Saturday, and there were dark rings circling her eyes.

"Oh, Virgie," cried the other, "it is such a beautiful dress, and only nine dollars! And I did so want it to wear tomorrow. We have a special service at our church, and I sing in the choir. But it needs alteration, and I simply can't afford to pay for it. If I only had your nimble fingers I could do it myself. It would only take an hour—they all said so! And it is so beautiful!" And she sighed.

"Couldn't you wear the blue suit tomorrow?" queried my friend.

"Oh, Virgie, I've worn it for three whole years!"

"I'm to have my time off in a few minutes," said Virgie. "We'll see about it. If it can be fixed in an hour or so, I'll take it home and do it for you."

"Virgie," And Carrie's voice was rapturous.

But after Carrie had passed on, I said: "But you're giving up your resting time."

"Oh, that's nothing—I'm not tired. Carrie is all thumbs with a needle."

Another hot summer morning, on Saturday, I saw her. It was during the months when the stores close at one o'clock to give the girls a little freedom during the oppressive heat.

"Heartbroken, Nora?" queried Virgie, smiling, but looking keenly into the other's eyes.

Nora's chin quivered. "Oh, Virgie—my uncle was going to take me to St. Louis this afternoon—my suit case is all packed. I was so happy. But Mr. D—— says there is a lot of extra marking to be done in our department, and I must work this afternoon. He says he expects us all to stand by when the pressure comes," Nora's voice quivered on the words.

"Nora," said Virgie slowly, "I worked in that department before I was transferred, and I know the stock as well as you do. Maybe Mr. D—— will let me work in your place this afternoon.

"Oh, Virgie, will you? But you want your afternoon, too."

"But you need your trip to St. Louis far more," said Virgie. "I'm going to ask him now, but I know he will let me." And away she tripped.

It was during the busy season before Christmas, when the girls were fagged and weary, many pale, many flushed unnaturally. A floorwalker stopped beside the ribbon-novelty counter and spoke to Virgie. Light flashed into her eyes, and ready smiles crossed her face. "Yes, I am tired, Mr. S——," she said, "and it will be just lovely to have two whole hours to rest. Thank you so much." The man nodded, laughed, and walked on. "Isn't he kind?" cried Virgie. "He says I look tired, and since we aren't very busy in this department right now I may rest for two whole hours." Then she glanced behind her. There stood another girl, quiet, without expression, without light, color, or enthusiasm. There were lines between her eyes.

Virgie turned to her impulsively. "You take the two hours, May," she said, "and I'll run the department. You look tired. Hurry now—you mustn't waste a minute of that precious time. Mr. S—— didn't see you or he would have known you needed the rest more than I. You must be back at four."

May tried to refuse, but Virgie hurried her away, and then with a smile that was half a sigh, turned to customers.

"How could you do it, Virgie?" asked another working near.

"She's so tired," explained Virgie.

"But you are tired!"

"Not very!"

"Why do you always sacrifice yourself?" I asked her one day.

She lifted the childish blue eyes reproachfully. "It isn't sacrifice. It's just one way of having a good time."

What lay behind the babyish expression in the little round face, behind the merry light of the childish eyes? A great heart—heroic heart.

A BOY'S PROMISE.

The school was out, and down the street
A noisy crowd came thronging;
The hue of health, a gladness sweet,
To every face belonging.

Among them strode a little lad,
Who listened to another,
And mildly said, half grave, half sad,
"I can't—I promised mother."

A shout went up, a ringing shout,
Of boisterous derision;
But not one moment left in doubt
That manly, brave decision.

"Go where you please, do what you will,"
He calmly told the other;
"But I shall keep my word, boys, still;
I can't—I promised mother."

Ah! who can doubt the future course
Of one who thus had spoken?
Through manhood's struggle, gain and loss,
Could faith like this be broken?

God's blessing on that steadfast will,
Unyielding to another;
That bears all jeers and laughter still,
Because he promised mother.

(Continued from page 3.)

DEARIE.

joy, worked in her, as all growing-pains do, a dumb dread of the future, a forboding of the treachery of all that changes. She wished that life might stop and go back, and that she might live the days in quiet succession backwards to her birth. Only the golden curls of Merrybabe put a light into her future world whose allurement even she could not resist.

The thought of the world without Merrybabe came over Dearie with more than usual insistance one warm afternoon in May when the baby lay sleeping in a hammock swung from the fragrant apple-trees. Dearie hung for a long time over the fairy-like beauty of the crown of curls rising and falling like little flames in the wind, and lying heavy with perspiration in a lacey pattern against her cheek. Deep sleep had drawn all the bright color from her face; only violet shadows came and went beneath the gold of her eyelashes. Dearie took the baby hands in hers,—they were very white and felt heavy, damp and cold—and folded them across the scarcely moving breast. Then she bent the branches of the apple trees until the "sleeping beauty" was quite enfolded in pink perfumed gloom. After that she filled the hammock with white and coral clover until Merrybabe was covered with a garment of beauty. And Dearie said to herself, "This is Merrybabe's funeral." Then she sang a sad, little song and felt wistfully contented. They had had the funeral of her dead blackbird this way. Peetche had put him into a box and covered him over with flowers and said, "This is Blacky's funeral." Afterwards she buried him under the big oak, but Dearie did not have to know about that.

And Dearie believed in her own heart's desires enough to be happy in her pretense until evening made the orchard heavy with dew, and Jacoba came for her baby. She found Dearie sitting in the long grass with great, sad mysteries shadowing her dark eyes, and singing, "Merrybabe is sleeping; Merrybabe is dead." For a moment the pretense seemed to bewitch Jacoba also. She uttered a little cry of startled mother-feeling, and Dearie saw in her face a look that turned her own little heart to stone. Jacoba took the sleeping baby's hands warmly into her large, brown ones and called to her softly in the old, forgotten Flemish tongue. And Merrybabe opened her blue eyes and smiled with delight seeing her mother's face so near her own. "Oh, Mamma," she lisped in soft, wandering tones, as if still asleep, "A big, white angel came and folded baby's hands!" And Jacoba was happy again. Surely it was the place of angels to attend her child. And Dearie, when she saw Merrybabe close in her mother's arms, carried through the narrow orchard-path, dripping clover blossoms as she was borne along, put her face into the long, wet grass and wept. That look in her mother's eyes had cast such a fear into the child that she was forced to tear the delusion of a world without Merrybabe from her heart. At all costs she must live for the beloved Fairy-child.

And the rose-garden and strawberry-patch around the old oak must also live for Merrybabe. Every evening it had been Dearie's love-work to pick all the little rosebuds, ready to bloom, for her mother's bed-room, so that her mother should awaken with all the little blossoms around her,—roses so small that they never reached the size of the baby's tiny mouth. But one day, Merrybabe stopped the rose-picking by declaring that they were all doll-roses and belonged to her Truda. The big rag-doll with her broad Dutch face looked as if she might prefer the cabbage-patch for her special domain, but Dearie knew in her heart of hearts that she could in no way please her mother by displeasing Merrybabe, and so she left the garden and went to the other side of the house to let her pent-up anger flame itself out on the pale iris that grew on the very edge of the hill. The slightest of greens united with the simplest of forms to lift the ethereal beauty of the large, pale blossoms into the iridescent mists of the evening air. There was no background to bring out and intensify their delicate color and form. They bathed and rested and lived in an atmosphere which in the dusk resembled their own soft violets and gold.

But their beauty to-night served only to sadden the bitterness of Dearie's heart, for she knew that Merrybabe could spoil her feeling about them also, with her practical baby-mind. She had a use for everything; her family of dolls, her kittens, and play-thoughts appropriated all like a hostile army. While Dearie was brooding over the beauty before her, the sun setting threw a last good-night over to its birth-place in the east, and just above the stately iris-garden, a rainbow bloomed in the soft heavens. Jan had explained to Dearie what "Iris" meant, and Jacoba had taught all her children that everything beautiful meant God's love and that the rainbow was for the promise of eternal love. And now, Dearie remembered all her lessons, and although a child of seven cannot read the whole mystery of beauty, she felt that there was something for her which the play-thoughts of Merrybabe could not spoil. "I will ask God to give me the rainbow for my secret-garden, when I say my night prayers," she whispered.

Just then the small, irresistible call of Merrybabe came following her even into her safe hiding-place. "Deewie, Deewie," she heard, "Oh, come, Deewie!" Dearie started up and retraced her steps to where Merrybabe stood, very red in the face, trying to push a large, ugly plant growing in a tub. "What are you trying to do with Ugly-fatty!" exclaimed Dearie. "He scared the little wosies with his big picklers. He can't stay in Merrybabe's garden any more. Come Deewie, help baby push Ugly-fatty away!" And Dearie did help with all the might of seven years and with a very glad feeling stealing into her heart. Merrybabe hated the old cactus, but she did not know that in August its great red-rubber buds would bloom. Just one night apiece! Dearie would have a secret that Merrybabe should never know. So she pulled and dragged the tub with its precious plant along the gravel walk and at last had it in a corner where the sun would visit it a little while in the morning, where it would not offend the eyes of the roses, and where the bright eyes of Merrybabe should not be attracted by its hidden treasure.

The eyes of Merrybabe had a particular fondness for Dearie's secrets. They had spied the weed-vine in which the compassionate heart of Dearie had founded a home for stray worms. Any poor, slow crawley thing that had no means of getting quickly out of the way of people's feet, Dearie would carry to the old weed-vine. From there, one day, Peter heard a cry that sent him flying to rescue Merrybabe who was screaming with fear from the dreadful sight of "lots and lots of crawley-bugs." Peter quickly cut down the old cucumber vine and carried it, worms and all, down to the river, leaving Dearie in silent grief, wondering why they could not understand that this was her worm-asylum.

But for all these troubles, there was Dearie's lullaby hour, which always smoothed the little rough wrinkles of every day, until that too was spoiled by Merrybabe. It was Jan's custom, after the long day's work, to throw himself on the cot by the window in the big sitting room to wait till Jacoba's supper was ready. And Jacoba's supper was never ready until Jan had had a nice, long nap and had waked, laughing and saying what a long time mamma had kept him waiting. And Dearie always sat in her little low rocker by his side with a big fan to keep the flies away. And all the time she crooned the old cradle song, "Hush a-by baby, on the tree-top," in a little voice like an old, old grandmother's. In Dearie's nature, all the love that had been planted from her earliest babyhood, had sprouted quickly and matured. The tiny child of Jan's huge, stretched-out form was tense with the tenderness, protectiveness, and concern of a mother. Jan's great, fair, sleeping face certainly looked not unlike a baby's in its crown of yellow curls, and the face beside him was old and infinitely sweet with borrowed experiences of love-full and care-full vigilance and devotion. In winter, the "Hush-a-by" was done in the dark, only the glow of the grate fire in a distant part of the room rising to mark an emphatic bit of rhythm in the singer's voice.

But one evening, Merrybabe asked to be taken to the meadows to meet papa and bring him home. The "bringing home" was race-horse fashion, Merrybabe perched on Jan's shoulder screaming with delight. And when they reached the clump of oaks that bordered the children's play-yard, she insisted on being put into the big rope swing. And, of the joy of going dangerously high and being caught in the mighty, iron grasp of Jan's arms at the most perilous moment, she could never have enough. Nor could Jan, for the hold of this tiny bundle of warm flesh beating against his breast stirred a new vigor in his blood. And so they played together while Jacoba's tea still waited, and poor little Dearie sat crooning to herself with Jan's two great, soft slippers in her lap, waiting to give the comfort that was for her the supreme expression of her soul.

But at length the time of the night-blooming cereus came. The dark August day seemed to have forgotten the very existence of summer and was discouraging the late-maturing flowers with a long depressing spell of rain. Besides, what was worse, the darkened windows of the nursery, the pushed-out vines and flowers brought a feeling of loneliness over the spirits of all, and over the soul of Dearie, a sense of crushing fear. Merrybabe was sick, dying! Grown-up people know that children do not ordinarily die from measles, but Dearie interpreted the strange warning that she must not go near the nursery with its most direful significance. For one dark hour Dearie's world was without Merrybabe. And to her great surprise and dismay, her world was empty. Her garden and tree-houses and secret-delights which Merrybabe had taken for her own pleasure loved Merrybabe, and Dearie knew that if they should all be returned to her sole possession, without the interference of their usurper, that they would miss that love and grow utterly hateful. She had made many sacrifices for Merrybabe, and these had grown into a garden-beautiful which quite unconsciously Dearie possessed as her best treasure. Slowly her heart brought her mind to see that Merrybabe must live; if her superabundant play-needs asked for all that Dearie was and possessed, there was big reason why she should live.

Toward evening the cold rain which seemed to have been borrowed from November, cleared away, and Dearie led by her old love for the iris garden with its rainbow blessing, went to the hill-side of the yard hoping to see the promise in the sky. But she saw only great purple clouds moving off, and the iris garden only pale green swords. But what had been there bloomed softly again in her imagination. She held out her hands to the sky and whispered, "Dear God, give half of my rainbow garden to Merrybabe and let us love it together, forever and ever, Amen."

As she turned away, her brown cheeks flushing with the strangeness of what she had done, her eyes fell upon the old tub pushed behind the heavy woodbine. Surely there was something happening in the corner! A large, thick bud had made its way through the vines and seemed to be waiting a chance to bloom. Dearie fell down on her knees before it in ecstasy, holding her little hands around but not touching it. She could see that the eager white petals were trembling in their haste to make the most of that one night, and she longed to help them and peer through the waxen loveliness into the mysterious, green sea at their heart. But an inspiration was growing in her mind, which made her quite still and thoughtful for a long time and then sent her quickly back to the house in the darkness. She went gently to the windows of the nursery, found a little open place and looked in. A tiny light showed Merrybabe in her little bed. Her face was quite red, and Dearie thought that she looked lots prettier when she was make-believe dying, but a glance about the room was all there was time for now. Merrybabe was alone, and so Dearie ran swiftly back to the tub. A very few minutes were long enough to drag it around to the nursery window that was nearest to Merrybabe's bed, and the window was raised gently and lowered again over a long arm of the cactus, shutting the lovely white bud in the room and quite close to the sick child. Her eyes were closed in a light slumber but they opened quickly at the first sound of her name called gently from outside of the window. She looked and recognized Ugly-fatty at once, but the great beauty flaming white before her very face filled her with big, happy wonder. In all her fairy picture books there was nothing so really magic as this. And sleeping again, she fashioned a dream-story that was all of love and which had Dearie's sweet prayer-ending, "Forever and ever, Amen."