

WHAT TO DO ON HOLIDAY AFTERNOONS.

CHAPTER I.



ABOUT a dozen girls, varying in age from ten to sixteen, were gathered in little groups round the three windows of a schoolroom. The scene on which they gazed in such listless fashion would have been charming in the sunshine, for the grounds were beautifully kept; but the croquet-lawn was turned into a shallow pond, the seats beneath the graceful old trees were only catching drippings from the boughs, and everything looked as doleful as long-continued rain could make it.

It was Saturday, the week's lessons were over, and the girls were longing to enjoy their half-holiday in the open air, but were still imprisoned, as they had been for days past, by that pitiless, unceasing downpour. Weary of everything, they stood gazing from the windows and grumbling at the weather.

"There it goes," said Marian Lane, the eldest of the group. "Drip, drip, splash, splash, as it has done for two whole days and nights. No chance of a walk, or even a scamper through the grounds. I have not had my head outside the door since Wednesday. We must be going to have a second Deluge."

"Drip, did you say? I should like to see a sample of rain that could be alluded to in such mild terms. It is one downpour. Talk about walking! If we venture out we must wade, if not swim for our lives. The paths are flooded, the lawn is a respectable pond, and there is a young river making its way to seaward down the main street; at least, the housemaid said the butcher's boy told her so, for of course we can see nothing. I wish we could."

"I have been wishing myself everything but a school girl for the last forty-eight hours. If one were a postman, a policeman, or even a milkboy, we should be obliged to go out."

"And if a boy at all, one might go on stilts."

"We girls might have stilts in the grounds, if only Miss Walker could see it."

There was a general burst of laughter at this suggestion, for could not each of the girls imagine the look which would overspread the face of Miss Walker, their head governess, at the idea of her young ladies taking exercise on stilts!

"Just fancy," said Clara Lane, Marian's younger sister, "our having two small boys called in from the street to teach us how to balance ourselves without going flat on our noses, or a master to put us through stilts' drill as we marched through the grounds like a company of exaggerated storks to the tune of—"

"The Dead March," nothing else would be slow enough for the long strides we should take."

Again there was a burst of laughter at the

ridiculous picture conjured up; for, as Clara remarked, it was as well to get a laugh out of their misfortunes if possible—all other sources of amusement having utterly failed them.

The girl addressed as Bertha was the only one who was not spending her time in idling or grumbling. Whilst the others were grouped round the windows, she continued busily at work, and had just completed a copy for her drawing-master when she first joined in the conversation.

"Begin anything else at your peril, miss," said Marian, seizing the girl. "Your persistent industry is such a perpetual reproach that I shall bear it no longer. Come here, little Wiscacre, and let me teach you a weather-rhyme. It is not original; but delightfully appropriate. Put your hands behind you this minute, hold your head up, and repeat after me."

Bertha rose with an appearance of combined humility and fear, placed herself in front of Marian in the prescribed attitude, and, after a mock curtsy, repeated the lesson after her instructress.

"Dirty days hath September, April, June, and November;

And all the rest have thirty-one without a single gleam of sun;

And if any of them had two and thirty, 'Twould be just as wet and twice as dirty."

More laughter hailed this paraphrase of the rhyme which was once supposed to fix on the juvenile memory the names of months and the number of days in each. Then tall, strong Marian Lane gave her pupil first a shake, then a little hug and a kiss, saying, "Bless the child! What am I to do with her? I fear she is incorrigible. She works when other people are idle, is patient when we grumble, smiles back an answer to our frowns, and, instead of rebelling when I plague her, submits in such an angelic manner that I have no excuse for shaking her into little pieces. She will not join us in abusing the weather, though, which is a high crime and misdemeanour."

"No, I will not. When I was at home with papa and mamma, before they went to India, I never heard them say, 'What a miserable day! What wretched weather!' Neither would they allow us children to do it. Papa used to say that when he considered Who made the laws by which the rain and the winds were governed, he could never use such expressions, for 'fire and hail, snow and vapours and stormy winds' were only 'fulfilling His word.'"

"True, Goody, darling. Now don't look shocked, for we do respect you, dear, for the way in which you think about and obey your parents as if they were present when they are thousands of miles away. And you must not suppose all our grumbling to be real wicked. Some of us are made of more explosive materials than you are, Goody, and the growl is a species of safety-valve to our over-wrought feelings."

"If grumbling would do any good, I would join you," said Bertha, as she packed up her drawing materials and put them out of sight. "Now you have made me put away my tools, please to suggest some employment for my idle head and hands. It is so wearisome to be doing nothing."

Bertha Fraser was one of the least of that group of merry school-girls, but not the youngest. She was nearly thirteen, but so slight and small for her age that she looked much younger. Her face was rather pale, and often an expression half-sad and half-patient was seen upon it. Her parents, whose only daughter she was, had been obliged to leave her behind when they went out to India, where they were likely to be detained for at least a couple of years; and her two brothers being grown up, she only saw them occasion-

ally. Indeed, only one of these was in England, and being unmarried, he had no home to which he could welcome his young sister. But Bertha was not unhappy, though she could not help feeling the separation from her parents a great trial. She worked cheerfully and conscientiously at her various studies, rejoicing as each difficulty was overcome in the thought of the pleasure it would give to her parents when they were able to see the fruits of her steady application. Her teachers could not but like a girl who gave them so little trouble, and did such credit to their efforts; and as to her schoolfellows, they loved her for her sweet temper and ability to bear any amount of teasing or petting, as the case might be, with equanimity. She had nicknames without end, "Goody" being the most general favourite, and she answered to them all as readily as though they had been given her in the days of long clothes.

Such was the individual who found doing nothing a wearisome occupation, and demanded employment.

"Nay, Goody," said Marian, "you must find something for 'idle hands' to do. Come, suggest a game."

"If she does, it is sure to be something dreadfully instructive, and so like school that once into it, we shall not know the difference," cried Emma.

"Well, as we are tired of all the things we generally play at we will give Goody a chance of improving our minds. Work will be a decided novelty to you, Emma, at any rate," said Marian, to the last speaker, who was the laziest girl in the school; "go on, Goody, and tell what the game is to be?"

"Get out your atlases and sit round the table, and we will try 'Souvenirs.'"

"Didn't I say so? Goody will set us playing at a geography lesson, and finish up with a sprinkling of botany, grammar, and common subjects, *vide* Miss Mangnall's questions. Never mind. Anything for us drowned-in-school girls who have got no work to do."

"Now, listen whilst I explain the game," said Bertha, "we are supposed to be a party of travellers, and to journey in various countries. We may go on horseback, by train, coach, steamboat, yacht, rowing boat, or even by balloon, if we choose. Only, when we speak of going from one place to another we must be careful to mention a suitable mode of conveyance. We must not talk of crossing rivers in a coach, or mountains in a steam packet, or the Arabian deserts in a railway train. If you do you must pay a forfeit. Then, whenever you arrive at a place, you must buy something and say for whom you intend it. The article must be a product or a manufacture of the place at which it is bought, and a suitable gift for the individual to whom it is to be presented."

"I suppose, Goody, you intend to convey some such warning as that it would not be advisable to purchase a fiery Arab steed in order that our aged grandmother might have facilities for equestrian exercise, or to place a pair of gold-mounted spectacles at the disposal of a three-year-old brother?"

"Certainly not, Marian. I see you have a good notion of the game already. There are generally plenty of forfeits and good fun in redeeming them, and we learn a great deal both about places and products."

"Right, Goody. Always combine instruction with recreation. What map shall we have?"

"As you are all beginners at the game, one which is familiar to everybody, say Europe. Properly, the game should be played without looking at a map; and after the first time we should put atlases away and use our memories only. Papa, my brothers, and I used to put everything into rhyme, and that

made still more fun; for we had forfeits for bad rhymes or lagging lines."

"Rhymes optional, then. We are not all poets born, or even able to make rain fit with Spain; so let us begin in a modest way. Are you ready? Goody must begin, for she knows the game, and we are only learners, and shall make blunders wholesale."

"Understand, then, the second player must always start from the place to which the first has travelled, and so on."

BERTHA begins:—

"I'll trim my bark and sail away
South by Biscay's stormy bay,
Until I come to Bourdeaux fair."

MARIAN.—"Pray what will you purchase there?"

BERTHA.—"I'll buy a cask of the choicest wine
That ever came from the purple vine."

"A forfeit, a forfeit, Goody!" shouted several voices. "The grapes are purple, not the vines!"

"I'm sure I have seen 'purple vine' in a real poem somewhere," expostulated Bertha.

"Well; if another poet blundered, that is no excuse for you. Hand out something," Bertha gave up her penknife, though by no means convinced of the equity of the sentence.

CLARA.—"Who is to have the famous cask?"

BERTHA.—"Surely you hardly need to ask.
I'll send the wine to my father dear,
His board to grace and his guests to cheer."

"Bravo, Goody! You almost deserve your penknife back again. I suppose, as you have started rhyming, we must follow your example, as it will not do for a mite like you to crow over us." And Marian went on bravely:—

"I'll sail my bark into softer seas,
And pass the columns of Hercules.
The diver shall pierce the waves so blue
To find the coral, dear girl, for you."

CLARA.—"From Malta the daintiest lace
I'll bring
To my darling mother, love's offering."

"I think that last rhyme is anything but good," said Bertha. "It has a lame sound with it."

"I'm sure ring and bring rhyme all right," pleaded Clara, whose first attempt at putting two lines together had produced no small amount of satisfaction in her own mind, at any rate. "If you are so very severe on first attempts we must betake ourselves to prose."

"It is all prose," insisted Bertha, "only prose in rhyme; but go on."

"I shall give you prose without rhyme, then," said Emma. "We have only one sort of wine so far, and I'll sail first to Xeres for some sherry, and on to Oporto for some port wine, to bear Bertha's claret company."

"A forfeit, Emma!"

"What for? Doesn't sherry come from Xeres, and port from Oporto?"

"Yes, but you cannot sail to Xeres. You will have to leave your ship at Cadiz, and travel north-east by some other conveyance, if you are resolved to buy your wine on the spot."

"Oh, dear! what must I give you?" And after a rummage a pencil-case was handed over.

ALICE.—"I'll trim my bark, and away I'll sail
To the Arctic Ocean to catch a whale.
I'll cut up the blubber and melt it down,
And the oil shall yield me many a crown."

BERTHA.—"To whom will you give the crowns so bright?"

ALICE.—"I'll spend them on bread for the hungry wight,
I'll clothe the naked and warm the cold,
And gladden the hearts of the poor and old."

MARY.—"To the Isle of Man I will quickly sail,
To purchase a kitten without a tail.
The gift is meant for a merry child,
Who drives my elderly pussy wild.
He pulls her tail and her paws and ears
Till ancient Tabby both spits and swears."

NELLIE.—"I'll steer up the Liffey to Dublin town
That I may purchase a poplin gown;
For grandmother dear it is just the thing,
The nicest present that I can bring."

ANNIE.—"I must sail back to fair Kirkwall,
To fetch my mother a Shetland shawl."

BERTHA.—"A forfeit, Annie, Kirkwall is in Orkney, not Shetland."

"I'm sure it is near enough, and we could get a Shetland shawl there."

"And so you can in London; but when you profess to fetch a thing in this game, you must go to the very spot where it is made. That is just the fun of it, and the only way we catch anybody blundering."

Annie gave up her thimble to Marian, who acted as receiver-general of forfeits, and grumbled that she had so little to do. There were only four girls who had not spoken, and as they seemed to be vainly cudgelling their brains for something to say, they were in turn allowed two minutes each to make up a rhyme. Failing in this each had to pay a forfeit for not having contributed to the amusement and instruction of the rest, and then Bertha concluded by saying,

"We've been to Ireland, France, and Spain,
And now we will sail straight home again."
"Now for the forfeits," said Clara, and Marian sentenced the owners, in turn, to redeem them; one by standing on her right foot until she could find six more words to rhyme with soup.

This was Bertha's task, and she rapidly enumerated croup, stoup, hoop, coop, roup, whoop.

Two were objected to, namely, roup and stoup; but Bertha triumphed by exhibiting the words in Webster's ponderous English dictionary, though admitting the Scotchness, as Clara called it, of both.

Then the dunce was requested to tell how many two and two made, reckoned twice over. She insisted on replying four, and with difficulty made to see that twice over, the amount would reach eight. Another was set to reckon the rain drops that fell on a certain spot during the space of one minute, and a second to check the account, and so on until the few forfeits were redeemed.

"That travelling game is not a bad one, Goody," said Marian, and I can see how it can be almost indefinitely extended, and be better than a geography lesson, by putting away maps altogether and journeying in imagination to far away lands. But tea-time is still distant. What shall we do now?"

"As it is hardly worth while beginning anything that will last long, let us play at 'Purveyors and house-furnishers.'"

"What is that?"

"We pretend we are going to entertain a great company of guests, and we have nothing ready. Each one agrees to go and fetch either one of the table or house requisites. It is a very simple game—first cousin to the one we have been playing."

Marian and the rest entered into the spirit of this at once, and it was carried on with the greatest rapidity.

"I'll go to Axminster and fetch a velvet pile carpet and rugs for the drawing-room."

"I'll go to Brussels for another for the dining-room."

"I'll get others from Kidderminster for the bed-rooms."

"I will fetch the linen from Belfast."

"And I the cotton goods from Manchester."

"I'll fetch the blankets from Bury and Witney."

"And we will have eider down quilts, but we will not send for the down from the Arctic regions."

"I'll bring knives from Sheffield, and all the silver and plated goods."

"And we'll have the fenders and pokers from Birmingham."

"I will buy lace curtains from Nottingham."

"And I for a change, others from Switzerland."

"The daintiest glass and mirrors I bring from Venice."

"And I painted china for dessert service from Worcester."

"All the other crockery I will buy in Staffordshire."

"Only the tea service which shall be from Sèvres."

"And the chimney ornaments from Dresden."

"Now provisions must be thought of for all the meals."

"First we must have coal to cook with, so I order this from Lancashire."

"Best Silkstone," urged a girl whose father owned a large colliery, and who was laughed at for having a keen eye to business.

So they ran on, bringing in imagination spices, coffee, sugar, meats, fruits, everything that could be required in a well ordered and extremely hospitable mansion, until at length there was a brief pause, and Marian made everybody laugh by saying as she ran out of the room, "And I'll bring you letters if there are any; for I see the postman coming up the path," and thus abruptly ended the game by suggesting objects of greater interest for the school girls, to whom letters were so precious.

In a few moments Marian returned, accompanied by Miss Walker, to whom all letters were first handed.

The governess had a large parcel to distribute, and, amongst the rest Bertha received two. There were none for Marian; and letters could hardly be expected by her, as she frankly owned that everybody had written to her and she to nobody in return. But of course all was right, or there would be plenty of people to send bad news.

"It has been such a comfort to me, dears," said Miss Walker, "to hear your merry voices ringing out so cheerily this afternoon. I quite dreaded another rainy day, as I know it disappoints you terribly when Saturday is wet. I was specially sorry, as I could not be with you myself this afternoon. How have you amused yourselves?"

"Goody has been setting us to play at games as much like lessons as possible," replied Marian.

Miss Walker turned to Bertha with a bright smile, for she thoroughly understood the child; but the smile faded as she saw her bending with tearful eyes over one of the letters she had just received.

"I hope you have had no bad news from India, dear Bertha," said the governess.

"No, Miss Walker. I have excellent news of papa and mamma. Both are well, and the business which obliged them to go out is progressing very satisfactorily. Then, finding that she could not all at once master her emotion, she placed the letter which had caused it in Miss Walker's hand, and quietly left the room.

(To be continued.)

WHAT TO DO ON HOLIDAY AFTERNOONS.

CHAPTER II.



ERTHA'S change of countenance and sudden departure had been noticed by those of her school fellows who were not engaged in reading letters of their own. Marian Lane was especially troubled at seeing her favourite's tearful eyes, and in her impulsive fashion was about to rush after Bertha to try to comfort her. But she

checked herself, having delicacy enough, with her usual warm-heartedness, to understand that a girl so sensitive as Bertha would prefer solitude for a short time at any rate if any painful news had reached her.

Miss Walker at length replaced Bertha's letter in the envelope, and Marian, equally curious and anxious, ventured to say, "I hope Bertha has had no bad news. She is such a dear little thing; we should all be sorry for her to have any trouble."

"Scarcely bad news, dear, but this letter has brought her a severe disappointment. Bertha was to spend all her holidays during the absence of her parents with dear friends of theirs, and in a most lovely spot. Unfortunately, the lady's health has suddenly given way, and she is ordered to leave England at once, and must also winter in the south of France. There is, of course, no chance of Bertha joining her there, for the lady will have to think of her own children—more than care enough for one so delicate."

"I am so sorry for darling Goody. She had been reckoning on this holiday visit for months past, and her brother Arthur was to have been with her for a fortnight of the time."

"And I," said Miss Walker, "am pledged to spend my vacation in a very quiet home with a beloved relative, a confirmed invalid. The rest will be grateful enough to me, as I lead such a busy life amongst my pupils; but I should not like to condemn dear Bertha to share my seclusion when she especially wants the society of cheerful friends to brighten her holidays. I must make some arrangement for her comfort before the time comes."

"I am sure any house would be the brighter, and any family the happier, for Goody's presence. I should love to have her with us at Westwood, and mamma would pet her to her heart's content. She is such a thorough mother that she seems to have room enough in her affections for any number of children. Though there are eight of us, papa often tells her she has not nearly boys and girls enough to look after, and that the overflow love-stream finds channels for itself amongst the children of people who do not care so much about their youngsters. Mamma would be delighted with Goody."

"I think she would, dear; and I could wish nothing better for Bertha than that she should spend her holidays at Westwood under Mrs. Lane's loving guardianship. But you cannot make such an arrangement without your mamma's consent."

"I wish I could settle everything this very

minute. But I must write first. I have only one fear, which is that every inch of bedroom may have been allotted; for it is a rule with us that during the holidays Westwood shall be absolutely full from garret to cellar. However I will write to-night," said Marian; and, sure enough, a letter was despatched by that evening's post, the length of which excited much amusement amongst the girls. They congratulated the writer on having turned over a new leaf of notepaper, and given at least one correspondent a proof that she sometimes considered it necessary to answer a letter.

"Wrong again," replied the incorrigible Marian, as she affixed the stamp and handed her letter for Miss Walker to put into the post-bag at her side, without even allowing Clara to see the address. "I believe I never do answer a letter. I go on writing what is in my own mind at the time, without troubling myself about the subject that occupied my correspondent's thoughts when she wrote to me, perhaps, months before."

"And has probably forgotten long ago," said Clara. "When I write I never pretend to go over the letter I have received, bit by bit, making my own a sort of running commentary upon it. When, what I call, a good-sized joy or sorrow calls for sympathy I like to express it. But to go on writing, page after page, telling that I am glad or sorry about an afternoon's excursion or a cold in the head, both of which were over and done with before you even heard of them, seems dreadful rubbish."

Miss Walker was at the moment placing the last packet of letters in the post-bag, for after tea most of the girls had occupied an hour in writing, and the servant was waiting to carry off their collective correspondence. Bertha was sitting quietly at a little distance from the table, busily engaged in knitting a baby's sock. Her knitting was always considered a great joke; but she would laugh and tell the girls she meant to practise, whilst she was young, everything that would be nice to do when she was a quiet old lady. But they all knew well that by means of Bertha's steady industry, and by thus using her fragments of time, many a poor child had its small feet cased in comfortable socks, instead of having to go barefoot. It was easy to see from the expression of her face that the girl had gone through a rather severe struggle; but, though there might be traces of sadness, there were none of a murmuring spirit or angry temper.

Miss Walker was anxious to interest Bertha in the conversation, and, turning to her, said, "If you were writing to a friend what would be the principal subject of your letter?"

Bertha hesitated an instant, then answered, "Myself, I think, and my occupations."

"Grannie, Grannie, how dreadfully egotistical!"—Grannie, be it understood, was what Marian called Bertha's evening name, and appropriate to her occupation of stocking-knitting. "That does sound selfish. What can you say in defence of such a system?"

"I did not mean to be selfish or egotistical; but I was just thinking how I feel when I get a letter from some one I love. I like to hear as much as possible about friends, and what they are doing, and I feel such an interest in all that concerns them. When I write to one who, I believe, loves me, I judge my friend's feelings by my own. My brother Charles, for instance, is in Brazil, I do not know any other person there, and he knows no one here. He tells me what he does and sees, and mentions any person who has been kind to him; but I should not care to read strings of names of persons with whom I have no acquaintance."

"That is a very good defence of your system, dear," said Miss Walker.

"Shall I tell you mine, Miss Walker?" asked Marian, and the teacher's smile being sufficient response, she said, "I endeavour never to send a letter the contents of which cannot be fairly considered worth the penny stamp I put upon it. Now, as I can only very occasionally value the news I have to communicate even at that amount, you will observe that I conscientiously abstain from writing until I have really something to tell; hence, when anybody receives a letter from me, it is certain to be worth having, and valued accordingly. If my plan were carried out—"

"I think," interposed Miss Walker, "that the revenue of this country would be seriously diminished and a large proportion of our postmen would find their occupation gone. Now, how shall we spend the hour between this and bed-time?"

The girls liked to hear the "we" in that sentence, for it meant that Miss Walker would be with them, and the presence of their governess was never felt to be a restraint. On the contrary, she entered so warmly into their pursuits, and was so ready to suggest anything that would increase their pleasure, that her pupils often declared she was quite as young-hearted as any of them, only a whole library wiser.

"Half-an-hour for a good romp, and half-an-hour to cool down after it, as we have had quiet games to-day, and want something to stir us up."

This was agreed to, and "blind-man's buff" and the "cushion dance" left all the players panting and glowing with the exercise at the end of the first half-hour, and ready for some less active amusement.

Everybody knows "blind-man's buff"; perhaps all do not know the "cushion dance," which is played thus:—

The players are divided into two sides and take their places alternately, joining hands and forming a circle, in the centre of which a pair of cushions or a buffet has been carefully placed on end. The players begin to dance round it, then suddenly try to drag their opponents towards the cushion in order to upset it. It is most amusing to see the way in which the players skip to one side, jump over the cushions do any and everything, but upset it; and it is astonishing how long they will succeed in avoiding a touch. But it goes down at last, and the player whose touch has caused the downfall pays a forfeit and goes out of the ring.

This goes on until all the players on one side are turned out; though sometimes the struggle is protracted and the battle fought with such determination, that the sides lose equally, and the final triumph is won by one of the only two opponents left to fight it out.

Boys have the best chance in this game, as the girls' garments are more in the way; but it is played by both, and sometimes they take opposite sides. Certainly girls thoroughly enjoy it.

Miss Walker had joined heartily in both games, but was one of the first expelled from the ring in the latter, probably not much to her own regret, as the exercise was of a rather violent sort for a grown-up player. As a penalty she was condemned to suggest the next game, and after a little consideration she announced that she was ready to do so. "I shall want one confederate, to whom the secret of the game will be entrusted; the rest will have to try to guess it. But first I must ascertain if anyone has played at this game before. I joined in it once, as a girl, but have never seen it played since then. I shall remain in the room with the rest of you and my confederate will go out. During her absence I shall place my hand on the shoulder of some girl, or upon the piano, or on my own

shoulder, and when she returns she shall tell you who has been touched."

Nobody seemed to know anything about the game, so Miss Walker chose Alice Milne as her confederate.

"No chance of screwing the secret out of her," said Clara, "for she is the closest little thing. She could not be fitter for the post of secret-keeper if her lips were padlocked."

The girl laughed, and went, not only out of the room, but out of earshot, and required more than one summons to bring her back. In the meanwhile Miss Walker laid her hand on the girl nearest to her, who happened to

discover any look or gesture which could help them.

"You must have heard, Alice," said one.

"But Miss Walker did not speak."

"She placed her hand in a particular position."

"Alice may come in blindfolded if you like," said Miss Walker, so that idea was abandoned.

One of the girls went out with Alice, brought her in backwards, so that she might not see Miss Walker, held her hands, blindfolded the governess, did everything in fact but find out the secret. As to Miss Walker,

"We give it up, Miss Walker. Do tell us the secret," came from the whole dozen of girls; but the teacher shook her head and laughingly refused.

"If I tell you the secret to-night, my dears, the game is ended for us, though you could introduce it amongst other friends. As you have not yet guessed it, we may as well have a little more amusement out of this game and you a little more mental exercise in trying to find it out before I tell you. We will keep our knowledge to ourselves for another week, Alice, and on Saturday next the rest shall be told."

This was agreed to; and so the evening's amusements ended. A little later, as the governess gave each girl a loving "good night" and kiss, she rejoiced to see a smile on Bertha's face again, and to hear her dis-



be Clara Lane, and on Alice's return asked, "On whom did my hand rest?"

Alice at once replied, "On Clara."

"Right," was the answer; but the girls, thinking they had found out the game, said, "You touch the girl nearest to you, Miss Walker."

"I certainly did on this occasion; but the position of the girl has nothing to do with the secret."

"I think I know it, but I shall see," said Bertha, and several girls expressed a similar opinion.

Again Alice went out. Miss Walker touched Nellie, and Alice, as promptly as before, named the right person on her return to the room.

The girls were at fault, and again failed to

her movements were very eccentric. She went from side to side; sometimes touching the same girl twice in succession, then resting her hand on the piano, and occasionally placing both hands on her own shoulders. But in every case when Alice was brought into the room she told instantly what had been done, and the end of the half-hour found the whole group of girls just as much at a loss as when the game was commenced.

cussing as eagerly as the rest the mystery of the game.

(To be continued.)

down the garden; I will show you some far better ones."

Between them the basket was filled with fragrant, luscious fruit. Not that they hurried over their work, for it was pleasant to linger there in the sunshine, amongst the beds of sweet herbs, to listen to the bees droning in the blossoms, and to see the butterflies flitting about like animated flower-leaves.

Ralph said the "Penny Reading" had been a success.

"We are trying to make them an institution in Brixleigh," added he. "Numbers of girls and young lads frequent the low music-hall and the public-houses there, and we want to win them away from these places by the power of counter-attraction."

"Do you think you will succeed?"

Ralph shrugged his shoulders, as he replied:—

"It is rather too soon to judge. We have only had two entertainments; both were crowded, and pretty much by the right kind of audience. Some friends living in the neighbourhood have banded themselves to provide amusements, such as instrumental pieces, songs, readings, recitations, &c. It stands to reason, when the youths of Brixleigh hear better things they will have a growing distaste for vulgar trash and inanely absurdity. But, like most reformations, no doubt this will be a slow process; perhaps, for a time, even an imperceptible one—but we must not lose heart, we must wait and hope."

"What pleasure you will have in watching the growing improvement!"

"I shall not be here much to watch during the coming winter, for I soon return to Cambridge. I can but take the first step in the effort, then leave it in other hands. Miss Forest, I want you to play a piece on our next evening."

"Oh, I shall be delighted!" Cora's cheeks crimsoned, her eyes flashed with genuine pleasure at the bare idea of being able to do something in return for all the kindnesses so continually showered on her head by these friends of hers.

Presently she said, with a shy glance of her lustrous eyes:—

"Do you really think I can play well enough, Mr. Burges?"

She did not ask the question by way of extracting a compliment from this very practical, thoughtful, dark-eyed young man by her side. She was above such petty trickishness, and in her unselfish wish to be of use forgot the possible individual triumph, or the reverse, that might be hers.

Ralph looked full into her questioning eyes, as he replied, slowly:—

"Do I think you play well enough? Need you ask after the treat you gave me the other evening? I shall not soon forget it, I assure you."

"Then if it will not weary you I might play over a few things, and you could select what would be most suited."

"Never fear. I shall not speedily grow wearied with playing such as yours. We will begin this evening. No; I forgot. The McArthurs and some others are coming. We must wait until we can get the piano to ourselves."

The gong was heard sounding loudly for luncheon, proclaiming to all whom it might concern that the Burges family were expected to assemble without delay.

"Let me carry the basket of fruit for you," said Ralph, as he took the tempting burden from her hands. And so they came through the kitchen garden together.

Fred met them on the lawn.

"Wherever have you two been hiding yourselves? I have been hunting for you all over the place."

"Picking fruit," said Cora, briefly.

"You should have asked me to help you."

"There was no need. I had plenty of assistance; see the result," said she, laughing, as she pointed to the full basket.

She darted up the broad steps, and ran to her room to smooth her hair and make herself presentable ere she appeared in the dining-room.

Fred seemed to have determined Cora should not again take unlimited rambles in the garden without his society, so for the rest of the day he danced attendance on her with unwearied perseverance, by turns amusing, or plaguing, or teasing her, sometimes vexing her with his nonsense, again luring a bright laugh to her lip by his sparkling fun.

It was all the same to him so long as he held sole possession of her attention. She grew tired at last, and said rather impatiently, as she glanced round the room at the assembled party:—

"Why don't you go and make yourself useful? There are ever so many young ladies in the room who look quite *distrained*, for want of some one to talk to them. How can you be so idle, Fred?"

"I am not idle; I am admiring you," retorted he, looking up into her face.

"You know I hate absurdity, and it is not kind of you to make me conspicuous before all these people. Your mamma looks as if she wants me; I shall go over to her."

"As long as you stay beside the *maier*, I shan't complain. You'll go down to supper with me, won't you, Cora?"

"I cannot promise anything of the sort, so make your mind quite easy on that point," said Cora, with a little laugh, as she went away and seated herself on a low stool beside Mrs. Burges's sofa, and there she remained until Ralph came to claim a promise she had made him of playing that nocturne over once again.

(To be continued.)



WHAT TO DO ON HOLIDAY AFTERNOONS.

CHAPTER III.



MORE than once during the ensuing week Miss Walker spared an hour in order

to amuse her pupils and exercise their ingenuity by playing at the game which had puzzled them so much. The younger teachers also joined in it, and proved equally ignorant to begin with, and unsuccessful in guessing the secret. "On whom did my hand rest?" remained a mystery, but at the end of the week Miss Walker revealed it.

"As a rule, I placed my hand on the shoulder of the girl who spoke the last before Alice quitted the room. But sometimes there were two or three speakers, and in this case I put both hands on my own shoulders. If no one spoke I touched the piano. Any article that may be agreed on will do equally well. With this simple understanding and an intelligent confederate, a mistake is almost impossible. You remember how often you insisted that some sign passed between Alice and myself, so we were both blindfolded."

"Another time some one was deputed to follow her into the dining-room as soon as I had laid my hand on the individual, and she answered correctly, because she knew who would be touched when she left this room. You can seldom introduce this game without finding some persons in the company who do not know it, and those who do always enjoy the fun of seeing the rest so completely mystified. I once heard an elderly clergyman declare that he lost a night's rest in the vain attempt to puzzle out the secret."

"It is very puzzling when you do not know it, and seems so provokingly simple when you do, that I, for one," said a teacher, "felt quite humiliated because I had not found it out for myself."

"So did I," cried Marian. "But never mind, I will plague them all with it when I get home to Westwood. And if I can keep our dear old vicar awake a whole night, like the clergyman you named, Miss Walker, so much the better. He has often been the cause of my going to sleep when I wanted to keep awake; so if I keep him awake when he wants to go to sleep, it will be, to me at any rate, an agreeable mode of retaliation."

Miss Walker shook her head rather gravely at this speech, saying, "Ah, Marian, you forget a certain old proverb, or rather you very often illustrate it by your doings. They say if you give some people an inch they will take an ell."

"But, dear Miss Walker, this is playtime, and I am sure I never mean to displease you with my offhand ways any more than I would do anything disrespectful to our darling old vicar at home. We all love him just like a second father. But you spoke about the other clergyman being kept awake by trying



A DAHABIEH ON THE NILE.

to find out the trick of that game, and it brought quite a host of droll thoughts into my head. I remembered how terribly often as a tiny child I had fallen asleep with our vicar's voice sounding in my ears, though I tried hard to keep awake. And, when dear mamma saw me nearly nodding my small head off, besides making all the other children laugh, she used to lift me on her knee and cuddle me close up under her shawl or mantle out of sight. There I slept in peace, and disturbed nobody."

The teacher's face relaxed into a smile, for nobody could withstand Marian's frank explanations, and Miss Walker was one of the most sympathetic of human beings, especially where youth and truth went hand in hand.

This talk took place on Saturday in the early evening. The day had been gloriously fine and the holiday hours thoroughly enjoyed in the open air. But now a soft white vapour floated over the ground, and the slowly rising mist showed that it would be wiser to spend the rest of the evening indoors. Marian had received a favourable answer from her mother, but for reasons of her own had decided not to say anything about the invitation which it enclosed for Bertha until the end of another week, and even Clara knew nothing about it.

"What game shall we have to-night?" asked Alice.

"Something quiet, as it is so close and warm and we have tired ourselves out of doors with 'whip' and croquet."

"I have been making up one that I think will exercise our memories and perhaps find us some amusement, though I warn you beforehand it is a 'goody game,'" said Nellie, with a significant glance in Bertha's direction.

"Shall we require maps, globes, dictionaries, or what?" was the general inquiry.

"Nothing at all but our tongues and memories. Being monitor this week, I was careful not to think of any wise game that might involve the taking out and putting away of school materials for which I am responsible."

"Let us begin, or I shall join Grannie at her knitting," said Marian.

"Grannie is putting her knitting away," replied Bertha. "Miss Walker, will you take part in this game?"

"Certainly. I may as well improve my memory also by exercising it. I suppose we had better sit round the table?"

"Yes. Now listen. The game is called 'Conveyances.' The first player says, 'I am going a journey.' The next asks, 'On sea or land?' You answer, 'Land,' perhaps. Then you are asked, 'In what quarter of the globe? North, south, east, or west?' and, lastly, 'By what conveyance?' This having been answered, you must guess the name of the country in which that kind of conveyance is used. If you are very much puzzled, a fifth question may be asked, but no more. If you cannot guess the name of the country, you pay a forfeit; it passes on to the next, and so on, until it gets, we will say, to Miss Walker, who is sure to know, and must therefore come in last. If you do not see the game all at once, you will understand it directly by practice. I will begin now, if you like."

NELLIE:—"I am going a journey."

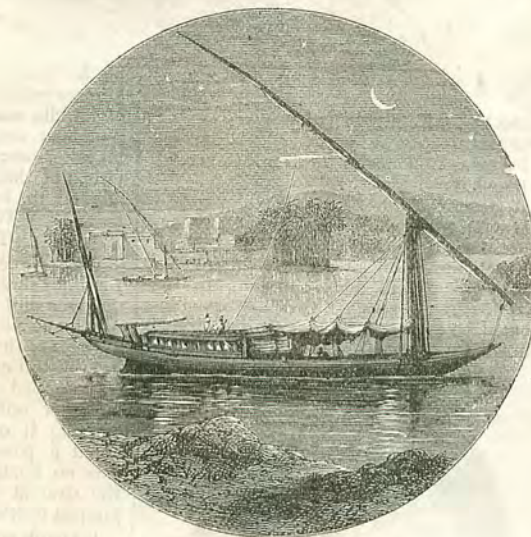
CLARA:—"On sea or land?"

"Neither," said Nellie, with a roguish face.

"Come, young person, no trifling with serious matters. You forget that we possess some geographical knowledge, and that one of the first facts put before the juvenile mind is that 'the surface of the earth is divided into land and water.' Perhaps you mean to go down a coal mine in a basket or up in a balloon."

"Neither," said Nellie a second time. "I have heard of castles in the air, but never of countries. I am adhering strictly to the game as I have laid it down, and I consider those remarks of yours equivalent to a question."

CLARA:—"I guess. You are going a



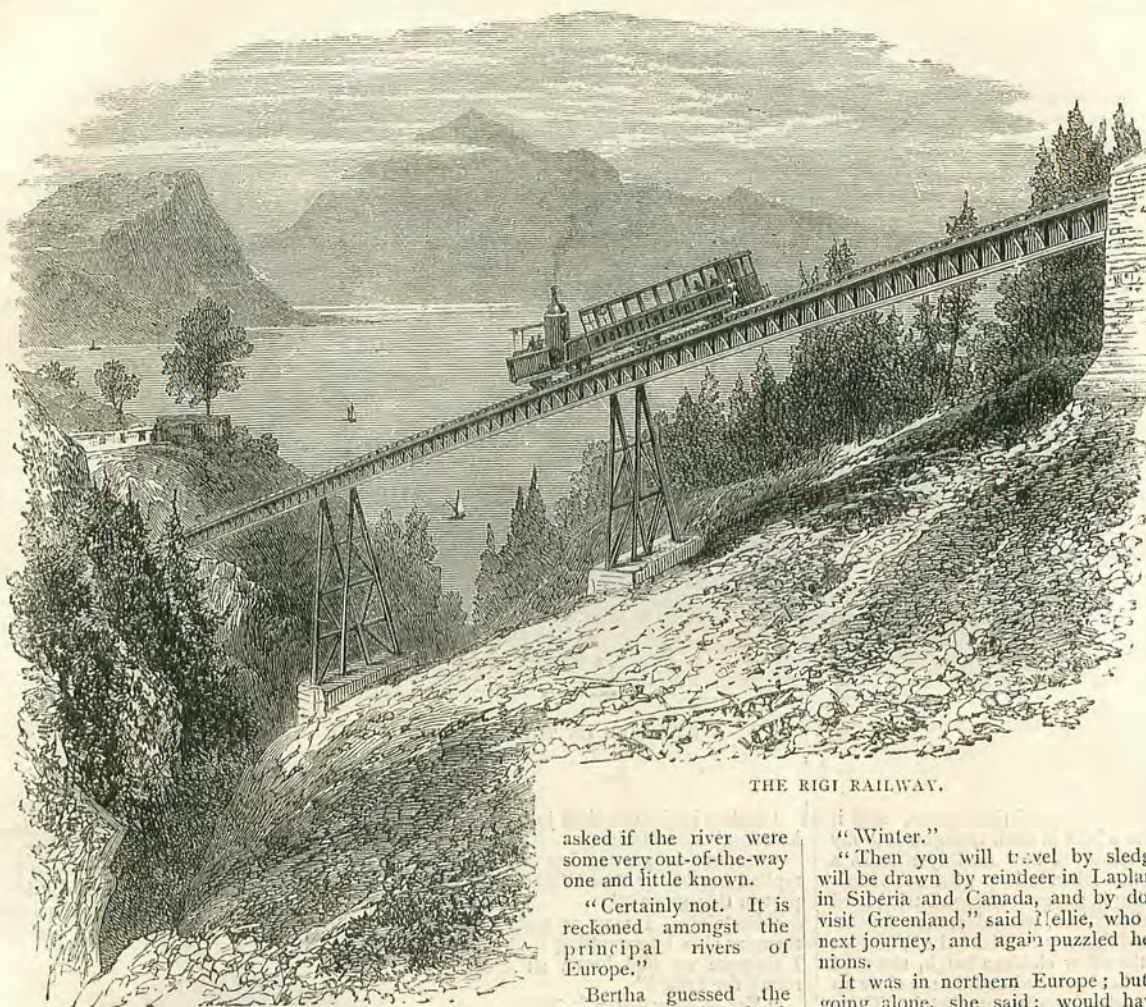
ON THE NILE BY NIGHT.

journey on a river; but in what quarter of the world?"

"Africa."

"Then I think I can guess without troubling you to answer the other questions. You are going up the Nile in one of those boats called a 'dahabieh' or 'dahabceah.' I have seen the word spelt both ways, and the boat itself looks very pretty in a picture."

"I have made my question too easy," said Nellie. "You are so dreadfully sharp,



THE RIGI RAILWAY.

Clara. I will ask something harder next time."

CLARA:—"I am going a journey."

BERTHA:—"By sea or land?"

"I may as well answer by river, at once."

"By what conveyance?"

"A steamboat."

"Much too general. I thought the conveyance must be peculiar to the country, and steamboats are found almost everywhere?"

CLARA:—"I will add something to the description. A steamboat which is flat-bottomed, so as to go on a very shallow river."

"In what quarter of the world; and whether



LOCOMOTION IN GREENLAND.

north, south, east, or west?" obtained the answers, "Europe" and "south-east."

The girls looked puzzled, and there was a whispered consultation amongst them. Bertha

asked if the river were some very out-of-the-way one and little known.

"Certainly not. It is reckoned amongst the principal rivers of Europe."

Bertha guessed the Danube; but Clara shook her head and demanded a forfeit. Some very random suggestions were made, and quite a crop of forfeits was gathered as the harvest from "blunder seed," as Marian called the mistakes. Some of these were very stupid, as the girls, not thinking of the position of the river alluded to, had guessed at random. It was now Miss Walker's turn, and she at once answered, "The river Don." This was right.

"Your question was not an easy one, Clara. I am not sure that I should have thought of the Don if I had not lately read a work in which the author mentions the extreme shallowness of that river, and names two incidents in illustration. One was, that the steamer was stopped or turned from its direct course in order not to run down a man who was crossing it on horseback. The other was about a passenger, who, finding that there was no landing-place at a particular part of the river at which he wished to stop, coolly jumped overboard and waded to the bank."

"Thank you, Miss Walker. We are all a little wiser than ever we were in our lives before. But I think it is hardly fair to pick such out-of-the-way places to begin with; do you?" asked Bertha.

"Well, perhaps these were rather difficult for the first; but this game is to tell about rather unusual 'conveyances.' I am going on a journey."

"In what quarter of the globe?"

"In three different ones—Europe, Asia, and North America, and in the north of each."

"Winter or summer?" was the next question suggested.

"Winter."

"Then you will travel by sledge, which will be drawn by reindeer in Lapland, horses in Siberia and Canada, and by dogs if you visit Greenland," said Nellie, who went the next journey, and again puzzled her companions.

It was in northern Europe; but she was going alone, she said; would have neither horse, dog, reindeer, nor sledge; and yet she would not walk.

Alice Milne at length guessed that the journey would be performed on skates, and then the rest wondered that they could have forgotten how rapidly the Laplanders journey, and what great distances they travel by means of their huge, clumsy-looking skates.

ALICE:—"I am going a journey—Europe; central part."

"Land or sea?"

"Land. In fact, I shall ascend a mountain by one conveyance, and descend it by another."

This was soon guessed. It was to go up the Rigi, in Switzerland, by that wonderful mountain railway with its three rows of rails, the middle one adapted for a cog wheel to work upon, and with only one carriage to each queer-looking engine. Then there was the coming down by a different method. Alice said she did not walk, or come by railway, or ride. Again forfeits accumulated, but Bertha suggested that she was carried down, and named the conveyance: "chaise à porteur," which is an arm-chair borne on poles, and common in Switzerland.

This was right, and Bertha next went a journey, which was also up the side of a precipice, and by a mountain pass. There were many wrong guesses as to the mode of travelling, and at last Bertha named it. It was by "The Ladders," a peasants' road to Albinen, a mountain village in southern Switzerland. The precipice is scaled at all seasons of the year by men, women, and children, the only road to the top being a number of rather crazy-looking ladders pinned by hooked sticks to the face of the rock. Bertha told that she

had herself stood at the foot of the Ladders, but had not ascended them.

There was a general outcry against Bertha's way of putting things, and a demand for the return of forfeits.

Miss Walker was appealed to, and decided that the Ladders were a road, not a conveyance, and therefore Bertha had to return the other forfeits and pay one herself.

Many journeys were undertaken in France and Switzerland by diligence, on the Adriatic in gondolas, on Canadian lakes and rivers in canoes, in Chinese waters on board a junk, over Russian steppes in a tarantass, up an English canal in a barge, on mules, horses, and donkeys in various lands. One crossed an Arabian desert on a camel, another on a fleet Arab steed, and lastly Marian said, "I am going a journey." To the various questions which followed she answered, "On land; in Europe, south."

Then came the inquiry, "By what conveyance?"

"On foot, and yet not on my feet," was Marian's answer.

"Then, if on foot, you cannot say the journey is by any conveyance."

"No more were the Laplander's skates a

I journey is the one peculiar to the part of the country in which I purpose to make a tour."

Nobody guessed this. Even Miss Walker was fined, to the intense delight of her pupils, and amidst a shout of applause.

"We all give it up; you must tell, Marian," which that young person did in one word, and with the triumphant expression of countenance to be expected, considering that she was the only girl who had puzzled Miss Walker.

"Stilts" was the word; but it was met by a chorus of protestations. "People go on stilts anywhere if they choose. I do not think you can call them a mode of travelling peculiar to a country."

"So you can on skates; but the Laplander's skates are not like ours, and I maintain that there is also one division of a large European country where the people habitually use stilts as helps to locomotion."

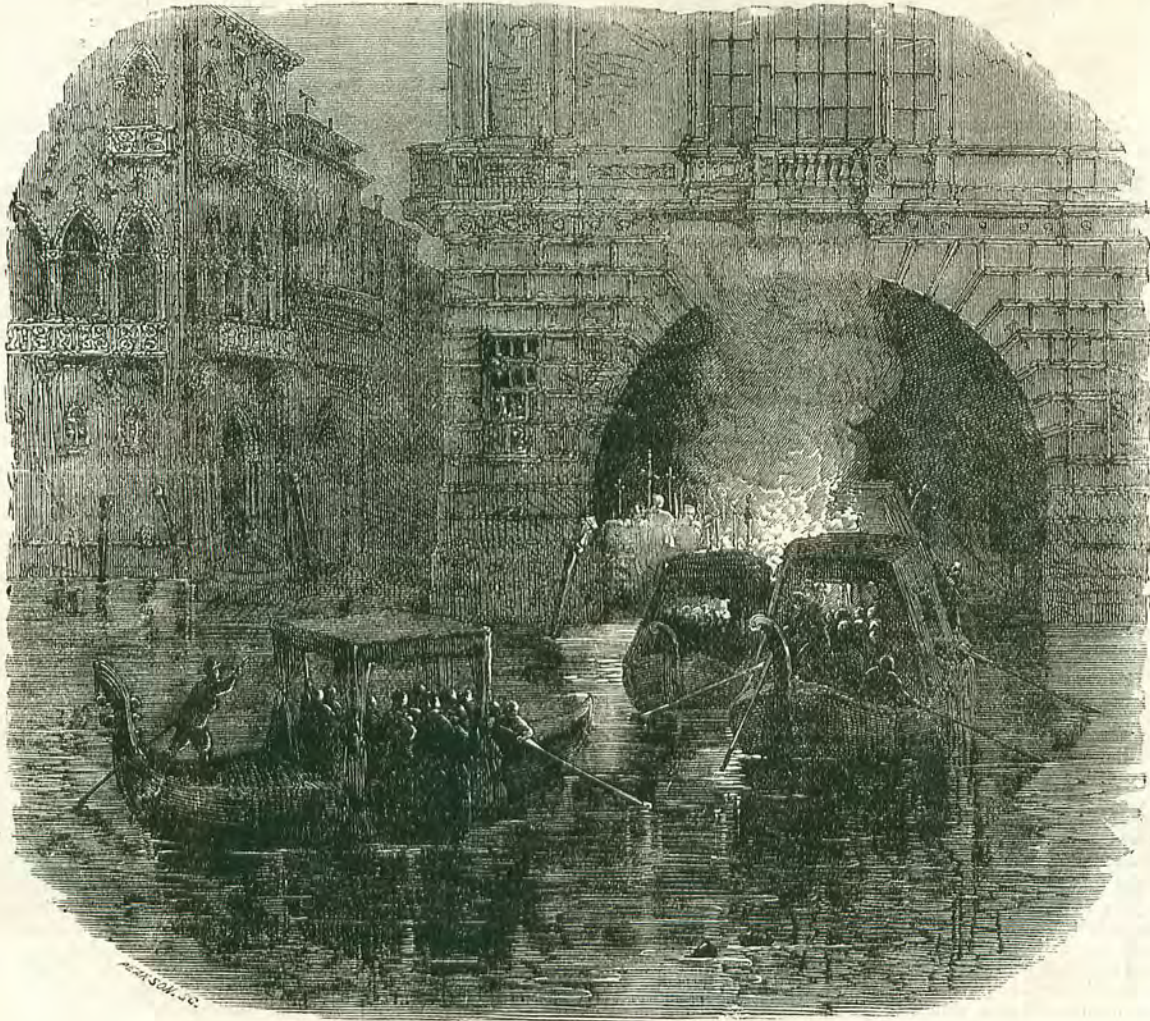
Marian looked towards Miss Walker, and the teacher at once replied, "Marian is right. The peasants of the Landes, a department on the west of France, constantly use stilts. They are, so to speak, a *spécialité* of the district. I deserve to pay a forfeit for having for-

neither drawn by horse, mule, ass, nor any animal commonly used for such a purpose, it seemed a puzzling conveyance. Wheel-



"ONE CROSSED AN ARABIAN DESERT ON A CAMEL."

barrows and hand-carts were guessed, amongst much laughter; but it proved to be a bicycle,



ATTENDING A VENETIAN FUNERAL IN GONDOLAS.

conveyance, returned Marian, "but they so far assisted him that he could travel over a large tract of country by their aid, and at a speed which he could not have attained without them. This mode of travelling by which

gotten this when it came to my turn to guess what was in Marian's mind."

There was another journey by a wheeled conveyance from the Land's End to John O'Groats; but as Bertha insisted that it was

and everybody wondered that it was not the first thing thought of.

"It often happens," said Miss Walker, "that the very simplicity of the thing, and the fact that it is so frequently before our eyes,



prevents us from thinking about it, and we go a long way to find what is close to our own threshold. I think this game of yours a very good one, Nellie. It causes plenty of amusement; brings out information at the time, and will, no doubt, set some of you to work to obtain more, in order to puzzle your companions the next time you play at it."

"Now, let us try to invent some new ways of redeeming the forfeits. Will you officiate as judge, Miss Walker?"

Miss Walker agreed to name four ways of redeeming or, as the girls said, "to pass sentence on four culprits," and accordingly she knelt down and, with covered eyes, gave the following—

"Confess a fault and name one of your next neighbour's good qualities."

This fell to Clara, who promptly answered, "I speak without thinking, and my neighbour is a good listener."

As the good qualities of Clara's neighbour were rather of the negative sort, she being distinguished for nothing in particular, the answer was considered very appropriate.

Alice Milne was sentenced to spell the three most difficult words that Clara could think of in one minute, and then write them down backwards. The words selected were pseudonym, empyrean, and gnat. As Alice was about the worst speller in the school, this penalty would probably have given her occupation for a considerable time but for the whispered aid of a sharp little neighbour, and Alice was much relieved when her forfeit was once more in her own possession.

Marian was told to find as many rhymes to the word joke as she could remember, and write in two minutes, and then—

"Then what else?" was asked.

"Do what has been told you, and you shall know the rest," was Miss Walker's answer as she rose from her knees with a laughing face.

Marian went on energetically, "Joke, coke, cloak, croak, broke, folk, poke, soak, stoke, stroke, smoke, spoke, yolk, oak," when "Time's up" was called.

The other forfeits imposed by girls who followed Miss Walker were old ones, such as "put yourself through the keyhole"—done

by writing the word on a piece of paper and slipping it through; "answer six questions without saying I, no, or yes;" "repeat without laughing any laughable rhyme or anecdote that your next neighbour may dictate;" "place your right hand where your left cannot touch it," which was done by clasping the left elbow with it—till, the forfeits and playtime being equally exhausted, the girls prepared for bed after a thoroughly merry evening.

THE CARE OF THE VOICE.

By MEDICUS.

THE organ from which the sound of the human voice proceeds is in reality a beautifully formed musical instrument, situated in the windpipe, about midway between the lower part of the chin and the top of the breastbone. It occupies that part of our anatomy commonly called "Adam's apple." By the lengthening or shortening of the chords therein, and the rising or falling of the organ itself, musical sounds are produced, and perhaps there are no sounds more sweet than those of a well-trained human voice. With that training I have nothing to do; that is your own or your teacher's business. I only speak as your "Medicus," when I tell you that a very indifferent voice may be rendered both sweet and powerful by proper care and culture. The health ought to be kept up to par when learning to sing or taking lessons. Straining the voice or striving at too high or too low a pitch, or trying to sing more loudly than nature seems to care to permit, is at all times dangerous; but it is especially so when from some cause or other the singer's health is not so good as usual, for in this case the heart itself may suffer so severely from strain that the effects of the accident—it can be called nothing else—may be felt for life.

Sweetness and expression are often nowadays sacrificed to mere loudness of tone. It

is delightful to listen to a young girl singing, who seems to feel what she sings, who is both poet and musician in one. I love a song with a soul behind it, but when I'm compelled to listen to one who screams I wonder to myself what wrong I've committed to deserve so great an infliction. Well, then, exercise of the voice ought always to be in moderation. Sing all day if you like—be like the birds—this is really strengthening the voice, because it is gradual and continued, as all exercise not in excess must be to be beneficial.

I like young girls brought up hardy, and the neck should never be too much coddled by day or night. It ought usually to be bare, and thus the organ of voice is strengthened. Even out of doors it ought never to be covered unless in damp fogs, or when walking or driving against a wind which positively feels cold. For be it remembered that so long as one does not feel the wind cold, but rather enjoys it than otherwise, there is perfect safety.

Hoarseness is caused in several ways. It may be the result of a slight cold, in which case it is generally removed by retiring an hour or two earlier to bed, by taking four or five grains of Dover's powder at bedtime, wrapping a large, warm comforter round the neck, and taking a warm drink some half-hour after you are snug in bed. Hoarseness may be caused by straining the voice, by which means you for a time so stretch the vocal chords and paralyse their tiny nervelets that they become flaccid. The cure for this kind of hoarseness is—rest, and "don't do it again." But hoarseness is often the result of short attacks of debility, to which all girls are at times liable. They must then live a little better, take plenty of moderate exercise in the open air, and a little quinine wine, or, if the gums look pale, ten drops of tincture of iron in a little water three times a day. A little borax dissolved gradually in the mouth and swallowed, or a compressed tablet of chlorate of potash, either of which you may get at the shops, is useful as a remedy for hoarseness.

NURSING AS A PROFESSION.

I AM given to understand that many of the readers of this paper are anxious to obtain all the information that can be procured on the subject of nursing, with a view to its selection as their vocation in life. The task of writing an article on this question is one of some little difficulty. Although regarding it as a grand profession, and one supplied with a staff most inadequate in numbers for a population such as ours, I decline the responsibility of recommending it, or of dissuading those disposed to join its ranks. According to the rough calculation made, and that probably under the mark, "to nurse the sick of all England properly, twenty-five thousand trained nurses, officered by one thousand fully-trained lady-superintendents, are required." In such hands the work to be done could be fairly proportioned.

Before supplying any information as to the schools and hospitals in which the requisite training can be obtained, the individual qualifications for a nurse should be carefully considered. These may be classed as *mental*, *moral*, and *physical*, each and all being indispensable in a "probationer."

Under the *mental* and *moral* she must possess good temper, self-control, patience, punctuality, cheerfulness, and a willing obedience to those in authority over her. Under the *physical*, good health, good sight, a delicate touch, quickness of hearing, dexterous fingers, cleanliness, and suitability of age. A chronic cough, a heavy tread, a tendency to faint, or to attacks of hysterics, any descrip-