

woman; everyone, Mr. Cameron especially, stood much in awe of her and unquestioningly obeyed her smallest mandate; even Roly, unbidden, performed magnificent ablutions before he presented himself for a meal, and Floss was often to be seen surreptitiously trying to mend her own pinafores in the paddock.

Mrs. Cameron could not but confess her place was not crying out for her to the extent she had imagined; indeed, the wonderful lady-help, Miss Macintosh, seemed to have brought the home into a far better state of order and discipline than even she, the mother, had been able to do. Little Floss was a healthy and most independent babe of two; Roly, three years old, was a sturdy mannikin who stared at her stolidly when, her heart full of tears, she stooped over him and asked, did he want her to go away again?

"Mamma mustn't go away in a big ship, must she, sweetheart? You can't do without her again, can you?" she said.

But Roly was a sea-serpent swimming on the dining-room floor, and the interruption irritated him.

"Yes," he assented, with swift cheerfulness, "mamma go in big ship. Good-bye, good-bye!"—and he waved an impatient hand to get rid of her.

Hermie and Bartie had just started to a good private school near at hand, and the teaching—all honour to the mistress!—was of so skilful and delightful a nature that the two could hardly summon patience to wait for breakfast ere they set out for the happy place. So Challis's claims tugged hard.

"But you—what of you, my husband?" she said. "You cannot spare me; it is absurd for you to even think of it!"

But he was excited and greatly moved at the thought of his child's genius. Deep down in his heart was the knowledge that had he himself been given a chance he could have made a name for himself in this world. But there was always uncongenial work for him, always something else to be done, "never the time and the place and the loved one all together."

"Let us give her her chance," he said. "It is early morning with her. Don't let ours be the hands to block her, so that when evening comes she can only stand wistful."

So they sailed away, the mother and the wonder-child; behind them the plain little home, before, the Palaces of Music.

(To be continued.)



POOR CHILDREN AMONG COUNTRY FLOWERS, FRUITS AND BIRDS.

BY MRS. S. A. BARNETT.

"DOES the cow lick in the grass with her tongue, or does she chew it, as the rabbit does with her front teeth?" "Which way do the sheep eat? Do they move their upper or lower jaw when they eat?" "Do sheep drink water?" are questions which not all of us can answer. They have yet been set in the hope of arousing interest in London children, who often lose many of the pleasures which they might have during their country visits, if they knew a little more about the country flowers, fruits, and creatures, into whose home circle they have temporarily stepped.

It is not surprising that town children know little of the country, or its people, and its pleasures. To the poor do not come the regular yearly visits to the sea, or into the country; and even when they have affectionate grandparents, or kind aunts who might "take them for a bit," the

railway fares are a hindrance, or the baby can't be left, or suitable clothes are not forthcoming, and so the invitations have to be passed over.

"I did enjoy myself in the country, but as my mamma had another baby girl while I was away, I don't think I can be spared to go again, I am sorry to say," wrote a girl of twelve, already weighted with her responsibilities.

All who enjoy Nature, or who have learnt by her gentle teaching, feel this loss to be a great one; and so the charitable give money, and the child-lovers organise a fund and prepare to find cottagers who will take the children in as guests, and last year thirty-five thousand fortunate children were sent by the Children's Country Holiday Fund for a two-weeks' visit to the country, there to get health, and play games, and have fun and make friends with the flowers and the birds and the animals.

It is no new work this of the Children's Country Holiday Fund. In London it was begun from St. Jude's, Whitechapel, in 1876, when nine children were sent; and each year since then it has grown and increased, and if people will give more money (ros. takes a child for two weeks), even a larger number will be sent in 1901 than went twelve months ago.

The good that these visits of a fortnight's duration do to the children is invaluable. They do not go into institutions, where laws and regulations are apt to spoil pleasure or limit freedom; they go as "paying guests" into the homes of country villagers, who treat them as they would do their own children; only feeding them more up to the standard of the 5s. a week which is paid for them, and with a due sense that these two weeks are the London child's only holiday. Not that all the responsibility of their pleasures is left to the cottage mother. No, the committee of the Children's Country Holiday Fund make arrangements with ladies living in or near the villages to which the children are sent, who not only select the home of each one, but act as country-side hostesses, and keep an eye on the little guests during their stay, sometimes asking them to tea, or planning their pleasures and providing indoor interests, if the weather should be unfortunately too unkind to permit all day being spent out of doors.

Kindliness and good will are such tender plants, that it does not do to advertise them, or even to examine them too closely, or else numberless instances could be told of the warm feelings which often spring up between the town children and their cottage entertainers. One child sobbed itself to sleep on leaving its "country mother," and another, on reaching London, entreated to be sent back to the village, because he "felt so empty" at home. The mother of one poor boy had only one leg, and he was deficient in intellect; but he too enjoyed a time away from town, and afterwards, whenever his lady visitor mentioned the country, his eyes brightened and he said, "Country people are kind; lady gave me pictures to look at. I like to go to country. Will you send me again? I will try to be good."

One lady who has patiently laboured for many years among the London poor wrote of her work for this Holiday Fund, "I feel that the good done is by no means transitory." "Little Michael has been quite a different boy ever since his visit to the country," said a clergyman the other day; and this is the universal verdict. Nor is the good fruit merely physical. The children sometimes learn cleaner habits, and keep them up afterwards in their London surroundings. One of the dirtiest little maidens of a Clerkenwell court has made, ever since she went away, "such a fuss about washing." So said her mother, with a touch of maternal pride at Polly's cleanly ways. And, more than this, the child's cleaner face has had a good effect on the mother.

There are interesting little discussions, too, and friendly arguments as to which child had the best "country mother," and each stands up for her own.

"I had such beautiful vegetables for dinner every day," says one.

"And I as much milk as I liked," cries another.

"I rode in a cart all about, and helped the baker give out the bread," chimes in a third; while another caps it with—

"But I rode in a carriage," which after all was only a spring cart for the luggage. And as the children talk of the past they look forward to the future.

"You promised me to go next summer," said a pale-faced child to me a few days ago; and her mother added, "She is always asking 'When will it be summer for me to go to the country?'"

It would not, however, be true to say or imply that all and each of the thirty-five thousand children who leave London by this Fund's agency were good, docile and guileless. There are all sorts, and it is true that "Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do" in the open country as well as in the close cities, and keen, active, happy lads will often do unintentional mischief.

A party of boys ran gaily about a field of oats, after

promising not to go into a cornfield, in ignorance that corn and oats were in any way connected. Another trio raced the ducks and chickens until there was danger of their having fits, in the honest belief that "they could run quicker if they would." I have known boys make efforts to ride the pigs as if they were saddle horses or patient donkeys, and we have all seen trees and bushes recklessly torn or broken in ignorant endeavour to obtain blossoms or fruit.

"Where are the public apple-trees then?" asked one boy, who had been remonstrated with on helping himself and his friends bountifully from a private orchard; and the information that there were none provided seemed to give him genuine astonishment. He had not known country ways. He had picked the flowers. There were plenty, and no one had said him nay. The apples seemed as plentiful. Why should he not gather them?

But this kind of mischief is not the only sort into which the town children may fall. There are evils of talk and knowledge of wrong which town-bred children necessarily come across, but which it is not well that the more innocent rural girls and boys should learn, and yet it helps both the duller agricultural child and the quicker-witted London one to know and understand each other.

A common pursuit is the best introduction, and to try and observe facts about the flowers and the trees, the birds and the beasts, is an excellent method of spending a long summer afternoon, and one in which the country child can take the lead.

"But we don't know what to look for," said more than one child when I first began to try and awaken an interest in "Dame Nature and her well-stored lap," and so merely to guide eyes and thoughts some of us who care for both children and Nature issued a few questions and invited all who cared to do so to reply. It would take too much space to reproduce all the questions, but here are four which will serve as types of the others.

"What flowers did you see growing in the fields, or by the side of the road, or on the common?"

"What colour is the flower of the blackberry, and what is the colour and the shape of the flower-buds? Can you draw the flower, the bud, or a spray and a blackberry?"

"What fruit was ripe while you were in the country? Do apples and pears grow in clusters or singly? Do the bunches of red, white, and black currants grow alike? If not, how do they differ?"

"Do sparrows and rooks walk alike? Tell me something about the movements of various birds which you have noticed. What gestures have chickens when they drink? Does any other bird drink in the same way? How many times do crows fold their wings after alighting?"

To all the children we wrote a letter, some of which is here appended.

"MY DEAR CHILDREN,—Some of us who are grown up know how much good and pleasure has been brought to us all through our lives by making friends with and caring to look at beautiful things in the country.

"We also know that there are children who go into the country for their fortnight's holiday and return to London without having learnt the difference between an oak-leaf and an elm-leaf, or between the song of a blackbird and the chirp of a wren, or between a rose and honeysuckle. This seems such a pity, and so to help you to look on the beautiful and interesting things which Almighty God has made, and which live in the country, we are going to ask you a few questions, and to see if you cannot collect some different sorts of leaves and flowers, and perhaps some of you will be able to draw an animal or two, and explain to us the sounds they make, or the habits they have.

"Have you ever lain quite still and watched the shy, dainty rabbits, and how they run and nibble? And the geese—what do they do on the commons? And how do the ducks behave to the soft, yellow balls called ducklings? Or can you tell what the cows do every day after their dinner? Perhaps the water-rats have been seen by you, or you may have caught a glimpse of a happy squirrel, and wondered what he was or how he lived.

"At the end of your visit in the country we are going to ask those of you who like to try to answer a few questions on what you have observed during your stay away from London, and then to the best boys and girls we are going to give prizes. To those boys and girls who will try and draw the flowers and the creatures, we shall also give prizes."

At the end of the summer the replies came in and showed the interest the children had taken in trying to look intelligently. About birds one child wrote, almost with pity, "It is very rough, but animals like straw for their nests"; another offered the information that "sparrows hop on their hind legs"; a third thought that "a rook had a graceful walk"; and another described straw as "corn with the pips taken out." One little girl naïvely wrote, in telling of the pleasure which a sunset had given her, "the sun was setting, and I got larger." One or two young artists made pretty drawings of leaves and flowers; others verbally described blossoms sometimes with imaginative quaintness, such as the girl of ten, who wrote, "the shape of the blackberry bud is like a dog's head."

There can be no doubt that conversation had been stimulated by these questions, and that many a child had been encouraged to intelligently observe instead of only to indolently look. "A swift," wrote one boy, "if it were to touch the ground cannot fly again unless some one throws it into the air." This is the sort of information obtained from talk not based on knowledge, but it pre-supposes a kindly human creature in frequent contact with be-earthed swifts; but the many replies about the way crows folded their wings, how sheep rose from the ground, the gestures chickens use when they drink, the colours of flowers, the shape of leaves, and the different ways fruit grew, all show that a great deal of careful observation was used; and I am sure it will be in the experience of all my readers that in such seeking is joy found.

When children are asked questions, they sometimes feel as if they had been set an examination paper, and "like school." But it was in the hope of making them enjoy their holidays more, and not with the wish of adding fresh tasks to these often over-worked small people, that we had begun our plan, and in order to show that and also to stimulate originality in thought and expression, we asked each child what he or she had enjoyed most during their visit.

Many and various were the replies about the greatest pleasures enjoyed. One boy wrote a long and detailed report of a story he had heard of a local murder; another liked "swimming hot rice," but whether the "swimming" described one pleasure and the "hot rice" another, or whether the swimming was used as an adjective to qualify a new accomplishment not hitherto observed in hot rice, we had no means of ascertaining.

We also offered a prize for the best story or anecdote about an animal, on the understanding that it was to be original and not out of a book. Here is the story which won the prize.

"A GRATEFUL CAT."

"A gentleman who lived alone always had two plates placed on the table at dinner-time, one for himself and the other for his cat. He always gave puss a piece of fish or meat from his own plate.

"One day, just as the gentleman had sat down to dinner, puss rushed into the room with two mice; she jumped up into her chair, and before anyone could prevent her, she had dropped one of the mice into her own plate and one in her master's. Evidently puss thought that one good turn deserved another. Her master had often given her a piece of his dinner, and puss, to show her gratitude, gave him a part of hers."

It is my hope that those readers who have perused this article so far will be enough interested to wish to help more children to care for Nature, and to observe affectionately her wondrous ways and cunning devices. If so, the way is open to all. The "grown-ups" can help, if they live in towns, by offering their services to the Children's Country Holiday Fund, to visit the schools and tell the children what to look for, and something of the beauties to be found by those who watch the flowers and fruit, the birds and beasts. If they can take pictures or sketches, they will find the talks easier, but in any case they will be welcomed not only by the children, but by the teachers, without whose generously-given help this little plan of which I have told could not have been even so far tried.

And if those who want to help are not "grown-ups," but still growing themselves, there is room for their aid too, for when they are on their own holiday they can find out where the poor children are taking theirs, and then share their pleasures and knowledge. It might not be always quite pleasant to play cricket with three or four town children, whose only field has hitherto been the court or alley, whose wickets have been one stick with a coat over it, and whose bat is ignorant of professional shape or handling, but one does not do charitable things to please oneself, and no one who has yet tried to give pleasure to those whose lives are barren of it has yet regretted the memories that are left behind. It cannot be denied that these young guests are not always easy to entertain. "I am quite tired by them, they won't get on together," I heard from a child who had honestly tried all the afternoon to play hostess to a party of town and country children combined, but she probably succeeded far better than she knew, and next time she is going to start them all in gathering grasses, or flower posies, or searching for some particular nut, or leaf, or rare berry. The common interest will probably do as it has done before in old history, as well as modern social life, namely, break down strong invisible barriers between those who, like the majority of my readers, are enriched by many good things, and those into whose lives' cloth the threads of pleasure have been but scantily woven.

In any case the experiment is worth trying, and therefore from all those, old or young, clever or simple, rich or homely, who themselves rejoice in Nature, and who wish to share their joy, I ask for service to "open the eyes" of the poor.

"UNSKILLED LABOUR."

By MARGARET SHIRLEY.

EDITH MORLEY sat in the waiting-room of a registry office for governesses and servants. She was thinking how tired she was of all her fruitless visits to that office. Day after day came the same reply from the woman in charge—

"We are sorry we have nothing suitable for you. When we have you shall hear from us. But there is so little demand for unskilled labour."

It was the old story. Edith Morley, the daughter of a country clergyman, had not received any training worth mentioning. She was not even fairly well educated. At

the death of her father—when she was just thirty years old—she found herself an orphan without a penny in the world. Edith's mother had died soon after the birth of her only child.

Her father had been in his time a man of letters, but unbusiness-like and impracticable to the last degree. He had never kept an account in his life. He had made no provision for his daughter.

Consequently, after his death, Edith was surprised to find that not only had her father left her nothing—he had made