

Family Reading.

A Duel between "I" and "Not I."

BY HARRIET B. MCKEEVER. Born in the depths of a human heart, I carried a lofty head; And in the haunts of my fellow-men, I walked with a haughty tread. Only one letter expressed my name, But in it a world of pride, I thought it better—and pray, why not? Than all other names beside. I met a spirit they called "Not I"; And, just as he glanced at me, He drew his sword and lifted it high, As he bade me bend the knee. I scorned him; and then we crossed our swords, And a duel there we fought; "I" for myself! and he, for his race! One glimpse of his face "I" caught. It was calm, and spoke of love serene; Not a gleam of rage was there; But still he fought with an earnest look, And a courage born of prayer. With strength angelic, and arm untired, He fought the duel of love; And "I" was conquered—"Not I" had won, With strength inspired from above. I bowed me down on a humble knee, With purpose strong and high; Ashamed of my former name of pride, I followed the brave "Not I." Followed the steps of the brave "Not I," Till, in an engulfing wave, I buried from sight my name of pride, Deep in a watery grave. Then around my path the flowers bloomed, The flowers of hope and love; With new-born joy I scattered them wide, Singing with echoes above. Singing the songs of a happy heart, Like a bird on a swaying bough; While rising upward, or bending low, Contented I sing—"Tis Thou!" —Home Circle.

Select Serial.

COMING TO THE LIGHT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE BABES IN THE BASKET."

CHAPTER III.—MRS. BROWN'S STORY.

Mrs. Brown was a fat, comfortable-looking person, the very exemplification of tidiness, in her clean, calico dress and snowy apron. Although accustomed to command in her own premises, and, usually, by no means bashful about expressing her opinion, Mrs. Brown was not altogether at her ease, as she stepped into Mrs. Clinton's parlor. Nora had been descending upon the quiet grief of her mistress, and the lonely life she had lately led in her darkened room, until the worthy matron had conjured up a picture of grim despair, which she dreaded to see realized. She was, therefore, not a little surprised at the cheerful air of the apartment, and the calm sweetness of the face of its occupant. 'Sit down, Mrs. Brown,' said Mrs. Clinton kindly. 'I want to talk with you a few minutes about your neat-looking children.' 'Dear me! ma'am,' said Mrs. Brown, quite reassured. 'Don't speak about neatness, this time in the year. Why, they are all near a'most grown out of their clothes; Fidgetty Skeert ain't fit to be seen! To be sure it ain't so much matter about her, poor thing.' 'Poor girl!' said Mrs. Clinton, compassionately. 'It is about her that I want to ask you some questions. If you have no objections, I should like to have her come to me every day at ten o'clock. I promised to try to teach her to sew.' 'Now don't, ma'am, tire yourself out with Fidgetty. It ain't no use. She never will be no different. I've tried my best, and I can't make anything out of her. She ain't right, that's a certain thing. There's little Mary Jane, ma'am. The dear little thing! You must have took notice of her! She's the prettiest, sweetest-temperdest child we've ever had; she's got the whitest skin and the blackest eyes. Why, ma'am, if she was dressed like a lady's child, she'd be a perfect picture.' Mrs. Clinton waited patiently for Mrs. Brown to get through her harangue, and then said thoughtfully: 'Is Fidgetty bad-tempered?'

'Well, no, ma'am, I can't say that of her. The little ones are always after her, because she's so full of fun, with her queer ways. But Fidgetty never will be no different; she's never got over it, and never will.' 'Never gets over what?' asked Mrs. Clinton eagerly. 'Why the truth is, ma'am, the child was first scared out of her wits. May be you'd like to hear how she come to us?' said Mrs. Brown. 'I should certainly,' replied Mrs. Clinton, with much interest. Mrs. Brown settled herself in her chair, and began: 'Maybe you don't remember seein' in the papers, three years ago this spring, how a ship goin' from Havre to Liverpool, got on fire and just burnt up. Well, that's the very way it was. Afore they knew it she was just one whole sheet of flame. The poor things, sailors and passengers, just jumped into the great ocean. Some of 'em had nothing in the world to hold 'em up, and some laid their hands on something they hopped would float 'em. On board that ship there was a sailor named Jack Warren. When he saw how matters were goin', he fought through the fire and got hold of his chest. Over he threw it, and then jumped in after it. With that to help him, he calculated to keep his head above water till a ship that had hove in sight could pick him up. Just as he had laid hold of it, he saw a woman standing where the flames hadn't reached her, with a little girl at her side. The woman wasn't screamin' with fright or goin' on like mad, like most of the folks. He said she looked right up into the sky and smiled as if she saw somebody, and then she began to speak as if she knew sure enough there was some one there to hear her. She prayed for her little girl, that if she should go down in the deep sea, God would take her straight to heaven; or or if she should live, that God would watch over her and make her a Christian child. The little girl listened and looked up at her mother. The flames came rolling towards them, the mother looked at the ship that was coming, and holding out her child beyond the heat that was scorching her own clothes, she waited a few moments longer. She saw they couldn't stand it. The water was better than the fire. The woman spoke to her little girl, then lifted her in her arms and threw her down into the deep sea. The child didn't struggle—she just gave up like a lamb. Jack Warren on his chest saw and heard it all. He said he never had anything take hold of him like that. He watched till the child came up, and then he laid hold of her and drew her on to his chest. 'I'll save her if I can!' he shouted to the mother. Such a look as she sent him back! He said it was like an angel's, so peaceful and glad-like. Then she folds her hands, and down she jumps into the deep sea. He couldn't help her, but he held fast to the child. It was two hours, before they were took up by the ship, one of our American ships that brought them into this port. That sailor boy, ma'am, had nothin' of his own—not even an extra suit of clothes, but he didn't seem to make nothin' of that; he just wanted to get a good home for the child, then he said he could go to sea again, and do well enough. They put the poor scared little creeter with us. At first she used to walk, walk all day, and cry all night, till nobody could sleep for hearin' her. She's been queer and restless ever since, though she's mostly cheerful now. I can't make nothin' out of her. We never knew who she was, for she'd forget everything. Among the children they called her Fidgetty Skeert, and the name has stuck to her and suits her well enough. She ain't likely to have any other now. So, ma'am, that's all I know of Fidgetty.' Mrs. Clinton's tears flowed fast as she listened to Mrs. Brown's simple story. The faith of the mother who could smile amid the horrors of such a scene was a lesson indeed, and Mrs. Clinton resolved from that moment to bear her own affliction with the cheerfulness of one who loves and trusts the Heavenly Father. Poor Fidgetty Skeert! How near she seemed to Mrs. Clinton now. What wonder that the poor child was restless and shattered! It was strange that she was not left a wild maniac or a drivelling idiot.

Mrs. Clinton did not speak for a few minutes after Mrs. Brown had finished her story, and the worthy matron at length took it upon herself to resume the conversation, saying: 'Now, we know all about Mary Jane. Her folks were honest and respectable. There ain't nothin' queer about her. Just as you see her, she is always.' 'I should be glad to have you send Fidgetty Skeert to me to-morrow at ten o'clock,' said Mrs. Clinton, half rising, as if to intimate that the interview was at an end. 'Yes, ma'am! Yes, ma'am! Folks must do as they like!' said Mrs. Brown, with a disappointed air. 'You'll just wear yourself out with Fidgetty Skeert, and no mortal use either.' So saying Mrs. Brown was taking leave, when Mrs. Clinton recalled her to give her a liberal donation for the asylum, which so far mollified the matron that she promised quite cheerfully to send Fidgetty at the appointed hour. That night, when Mrs. Clinton knelt in her lonely room, the name of the poor orphan was mingled in her prayers. 'We pray for those whom we love, we love those for whom we pray. Love and prayer were springing up for Fidgetty Skeert. Not in vain had been the smiling faith of her dying mother.'

CHAPTER IV.—THE FIRST LESSON. Mrs. Clinton had found a new subject for thought, a new object for interest. She had not forgotten the dear children whose existence was so twined with hers that she must ever have a painful sense of their absence; but she had ceased to shut herself up to grief. She no longer busied herself with looking over their clothing, reading their favourite books, or treasuring up the toys of the merry boy, with a melancholy pleasure. She had something else to do. She must prepare for her pupil. Mrs. Clinton turned down the hem of a coarse towel, and commenced the work herself, with a needle large enough to be held by the most unskilled hand. Then she placed a chair at her side, and sat down to await the arrival of Fidgetty Skeert. Mrs. Clinton had to wait only a few moments; that short time she spent in asking the blessing of heaven on the task she had undertaken. A slight disturbance at the door first made Mrs. Clinton aware that her protegee had arrived. Nora was evidently in high discussion with some one, and Mrs. Clinton thought she could distinguish the tones of Fidgetty Skeert in reply. Mrs. Clinton stepped into the hall. 'She hasn't wiped her feet, ma'am, and she won't do it either; see how she tracks the oil-cloth,' said Nora indignantly. 'Wipe your feet, Fidgetty,' said Mrs. Clinton calmly. The girl promptly obeyed, and then hurried down the hall as if she feared to lose sight of the face she was already inclined to love. Mrs. Clinton was resuming her seat when Fidgetty burst in after her, and running up to her, threw into her lap a handful of violets, saying: 'Fidgetty wanted to bring something.' 'You have brought something I like very much,' said Mrs. Clinton, with a kind smile. 'How very sweet they are. Do you love flowers, Fidgetty?' Fidgetty began to walk about the room, saying as fast as possible: 'Violets, daisies, daffies, dandelions, tulips, roses, pinks and posies; Fidgetty likes them all.' On the flowers of the carpet, Fidgetty carefully stepped as she spoke, and her movement was more like a dance than a walk. 'I want you to sit down and sew now. Here is your work. I have made it ready for you,' said Mrs. Clinton kindly. Fidgetty sat down, put in two or three stitches as Mrs. Clinton carefully directed her, then jumping up suddenly, she resumed her irregular rambles round the room. Mrs. Clinton rose and touched the bell, and Nora promptly appeared. 'Bring in the box of seeds, Nora,' said Mrs. Clinton, and the box was brought. In it were arranged paper bags of various colors, in which the seeds were nicely put away. 'Now, Fidgetty,' said Mrs. Clinton, cheerfully, 'we are going to put up the sewing for to-day. I want you to help me arrange these little bags. They are all filled with seeds—seeds of beautiful flowers. Those in the pink papers like that, are all to be planted at the same time, and we will pick them out and place them together. If you do your work well, you shall have a little spot in my garden all for your own.' Fidgetty's eyes opened wide with delight, and she exclaimed: 'How nice! how nice!' For a few moments she worked quite steadily, and as long as she did so, Mrs. Clinton was perfectly silent. Soon, however, she started as if to rise up and resume her skipping. Then Mrs. Clinton laid her hand gently on her arm and said: 'Keep on with your work, Fidgetty. I want to tell you about these flowers. We will plant them the last week in May. Some in your garden and some in mine. They will all be hidden under the ground; but the sun will shine, and the showers will come down, and by and by the little green leaves will peep up above the warm, moist earth, and then how glad we shall be.' Fidgetty clapped her hands, and was going to start up again, but Mrs. Clinton immediately began to speak, and again the strange pupil resumed her work. On—on went Mrs. Clinton, talking, talking, hardly daring to stop for a moment, lest she should see Fidgetty rising for one of those dancing movements of which she was so fond. Mrs. Clinton told of the birds who gather straw by straw, and hair by hair the materials for their nests. She described the pretty eggs lying in their soft nests; the young birds, thin, ugly, and helpless; and then, the fat little creatures, too large for their home, who have to be pushed out before they learn to fly. Fidgetty listened and worked and still Mrs. Clinton went on. 'Birds and bees, flowers and trees, all busy, all do something. All made for something. Fidgetty can't do anything,' said the poor girl, sorrowfully, when Mrs. Clinton paused. 'Fidgetty can work like a good, industrious girl,' said Mrs. Clinton, encouragingly. 'See how many piles of paper you have laid aside!' Fidgetty looked with astonishment and pleasure at what she had accomplished. 'You will have to try very hard Fidgetty, and then you will be a dear, useful girl. I know you will,' said Mrs. Clinton affectionately. Fidgetty saw the loving, tender look that accompanied the words. She snatched Mrs. Clinton's hand and covered it with tears and kisses. 'I will try, indeed I will. You are so very good to me. What makes you care for poor Fidgetty Skeert?' 'That was a hard question to answer, and for a moment Mrs. Clinton was silent. 'No matter why, no matter why, Fidgetty, only remember I do really care for you,' she said, at length. 'Now we will put our work aside, and you shall sing with me.' Mrs. Clinton began to sing 'the Happy Land,' and Fidgetty joined her; but as soon as Fidgetty rose, Mrs. Clinton stopped, and in this way, she kept her pupil quiet until they had gone through the whole of the hymn. Then Mrs. Clinton chose a simple tune with which Fidgetty was not familiar. Hearing it once was sufficient for her. She had caught it perfectly, and was delighted to be able again to join her voice with that of her instructor. 'Now, Fidgetty, you may go; and come again to-morrow,' said Mrs. Clinton, who was quite worn out with the exertion she had made. 'You have done very well. I am pleased with you.' 'Will Fidgetty be somebody some time?' said the poor girl eagerly. 'Fidgetty is somebody new,' said Mrs. Clinton, kindly. 'I thought I could never be anybody. I thought I could never learn anything. Oh! I am so glad,' exclaimed the singular child, starting up in delight. 'I must go now, must I? I'll come to-morrow. Good-bye, dear good lady, good-bye.' Out of the door, along the hall, along the street, went Fidgetty with a hop, skip, and jump. It was not restlessness alone that prompted her movements that day; they sprang from the joyousness of hope, and the certainty that there was at least one friend who looked on her with loving interest.

A Blind Woman's Letter.

The following letter from Laura Bridgman is furnished us by Rev. F. Merriam, of Danbury, N. H. He says, with truth, that 'it is a wonderful letter, considering whence it comes.' It was written to Laura's youngest sister, whom Pastor Merriam baptized in Hanover some years since. Only youngest readers, we think, will need be told who Laura Bridgman is. Many years ago, when a child of two years, she had a sickness which destroyed her sight, hearing and smell, so that she seemed shut out from the world. She was received as a pupil in the South Boston Institution for the blind; the letter shows in some measure what the school has done for her.

South Boston, Jan. 22, 1882.

MY DEAR HONEY.—What a charming and loving Sabbath! God is ever merciful and gracious in all His dealings toward us, to whom we should be grateful always for whatever He bestows upon us. It is a task for me to write, because of debility of my nervous system, and also am thoroughly tired most of the time this winter. Nothing is relishing hardly. I do not take a repose on my bed daily for many weeks, as formerly, as my time has been so extremely fully occupied with lace knitting, etc. Had a cough for nearly two months, soon as I departed from home. I got a slight cold there, and more at Lebanon, but was so very tired and excited coming to South Boston. I was overjoyed in seeing so many friends, which was the cause of my being ill a few days with cold and fatigue and excitement. Dr. Homans made a gift of some cherry medicine for my benefit, but I delayed its taste; but it will keep. I had many orders laid on my poor head by some people who wished to give some specimens of my manufacture for Christmas. Still there are several orders lying in my memory. I commenced the privilege of reading a birthday book that my adopted brother Heady was so kind to send to me just ere the anniversary of my birthday. The title is, 'Boys of Other Countries,' and it is so interesting, and comical, too. I sent Mrs. Garfield a letter and picture of myself for Christmas, and had a nice, brief letter, so sad, from her directly. I wish you many happy New Years, hoping for you to feel much better, if God's holy will be done. I cannot write many pages more. It exhausts me. My regards to C. A kiss for Harry. I wish to enclose a note to mother. Good evening. Your loving sister, LAURA D. BRIDGMAN. —Watchman.

A German satirist has produced the following fable of which the application is apparent:—'There were once four flies, and, as it happened, they were hungry one morning. The first settled upon a sausage of singularly appetizing appearance, and made a hearty meal. But he speedily died of intestinal inflammation, for the sausage was adulterated with aniline. The second fly breakfasted upon flour, and forthwith succumbed to contraction of the stomach owing to the inordinate quantity of alum with which the flour had been adulterated. The third fly was slaking his thirst with the contents of the milk jug, when violent cramps suddenly convulsed his frame, and he soon gave up the ghost, a victim to chalk adulteration. Seeing this, the fourth fly, muttering to himself, 'The sooner it's over the sooner to sleep,' alighted upon a moistened sheet of paper exhibiting the counterfeit presentment of a death's head and the inscription, 'Fly Poison.' Applying the tip of his proboscis to this device, the fourth fly drank to his heart's content, growing more vigorous and cheerful at every mouthful, although expectant of his end. But he did not die. On the contrary, he thrived and waxed fat. You see, even the fly poison was adulterated.'

The Tricycle is coming more and more into use in Britain. The riders are not nearly so much recruits from the ranks of bicyclists as men who have done nothing in the way of riding before. It is convenient for ministers visiting in country parts, for elderly gentlemen who do not take comfortably to bicycles, and those with roomy seats are very convenient for young couples on their honeymoons.

Copy of a notice on the beach of Brighton: 'In case of ladies in danger of drowning, they should be seized by the clothing and not by the hair which generally comes off.'

The Selfish Oyster.

There once was a selfish old Oyster, Who lived like a monk in a cloister, Safely housed in his shell, Like the monk in his cell, Though the bivalve's apartment was moist. Anchored tight in the mud of the bay This lazy old party did stay. Nor cared he to roam Very far from his home; For exertion, he thought, did not pay. And you will be wondering, I think, What he did for his victuals and drink. Well, the Oyster was sly, And when young crabs came by, He would catch them as quick as a wink. Then in him the poor crabs had to stay, Till in time they had melted away. So the Oyster got fatter, And the crabs—but no matter— For crabs have no souls, people say. 'And O! ho!' said the Oyster, said he: 'What a lucky old party I be! Like a king in his pride I wait here, and the tide Every day brings my living to me.' But there came a grim Star-fish who spied, Our friend lying flat on his side; For the greedy old sinner Had just had his dinner, And now could not run had he tried. With a spring to the Oyster he came, And he threw his five arms round the same. He shut off his breath, And he squeezed him to death. Then he ate him, nor felt any shame. The point of this story, my dears, Just 'as plain as a pikestaff' appears. But please give attention, While briefly I mention The moral again, for your ears. Don't be greedy and live but to eat, Caring only for bread and for meat; Nor selfishly dwell All alone in your shell,— Don't be oysters, in short, I repeat. But you'll find it much better for you To be kind, and unselfish, and true; Then you'll not lack a friend When a Star-fish rolls into your view. —St. Nicholas.

Anecdote of a Great Naturalist.

A good story is told of Agassiz, the great Naturalist. His father destined him for a commercial life, and was impatient at his devotion to frogs, snakes, and fishes. The last, especially, were objects of the boy's attention. His vacations he spent in making journeys on foot through Europe, examining the different species of fresh-water fishes. He came to London, with letters of introduction to Sir Roderick Murchison. 'You have been studying nature,' said the great man, bluntly. 'What have you learned?' The lad was timid, not sure at that moment that he had learned anything. 'I think,' he said, at last, 'I know a little about fishes.' 'Very well. There will be a meeting of the Royal Society to-night. I will take you with me there.' All of the great scientific savants of England belonged to this Society. That evening, towards its close, Sir Roderick rose and said: 'I have a young friend here from Switzerland, who thinks he knows something about fishes; how much, I have a fancy to try. There is, under this cloth, a perfect skeleton of a fish which existed long before man. Hethen gave the precise locality in which it had been found, with one or two other facts concerning it. The species to which the specimen belonged was, of course, extinct. Can you sketch for me on the black-board your idea of this fish?' said Sir Roderick. Agassiz took up the chalk, hesitated a moment and then sketched rapidly a skeleton fish. Sir Roderick held up the specimen. The portrait was correct in every bone and line. The grave old doctors burst into loud applause. 'Sir,' Agassiz said, on telling the story, 'that was the proudest moment of my life—no, the happiest; for I knew, now, my father would consent that I should give my life to science.' Feebleness of means is, in fact, the feebleness of him that employs them.—John Foster.