

A CHILD'S IMAGINATION.

In childhood magic and mystery lie close around us. Our world is filled with strange, unfathomable things that pique the curiosity, so strong in the child mind. If our fancy so directs, our fantastic imagination pictures for us wild and uncanny creations from mere shadows, or exaggerates insignificant details into gigantic and terrible portents. One moment delightful enchantment and charm surround us, the next we are besieged by omens and signs of the most alarming nature.

The child views everything with the eyes of wonder. How very little after all is required to catch the childish fancy! Little incidents, trivial happenings, to us utterly without consequence, become to him circumstances of the utmost significance. Who but the child can tell how many genii, how many imps, how many fairies, are contained in a pipeful of grandfather's tobacco? Who but himself can appreciate the deep import of the old trunk in the garret, or the old cabinet in the hay-loft? What conjecture can you make as to the number of bold Spanish pirates, with long, black, ferocious "moustachios" and high, buckskin boots, that have been slain by that dirk that hangs on the wall of father's library? Imagine, if you can, the numberless palaces of Aladdin that every tall, white cloud contains, of a summer's day. But they are there, for the child sees them.

The world is new to the child. What the eye does not discover for him the imagination must supply. When, in his everlasting reaching out for more knowledge, things do not meet his idea (or ideal) of the fitting the gap must be supplied, and his fancy must do the trick. For him, the very absence of romance is an incentive to romanticism. The world is fairyland, whether or no—let's all be gnomes and fairies.

For, mark you, if it isn't fairies, it's gnomes. If the child can discover nothing beautiful in his surroundings, he must go to the other extreme and depict to himself beings of untold horror. And sometimes he even prefers to do so. Just as, now, we all like to be "scared" a little; so it is with the child, only he will stand no half-way measures. With him it must be a genuine fright. He will have it so.

One evening when grandfather had gotten out his pipe and had drawn up close to the fireplace, I found my drawing book and began to draw pictures. Outside, the wind was howling and crying, and once in a while a fierce gust would find its way down the chimney and make the burning logs crackle suddenly and sharply, and twist their smoke into curious figures. Funny shadows danced on the wall, and grandfather's presence became very comforting at times. But I went on with my drawing.

I drew houses, and roosters, and cows, and trees. But they were very tame. Soon I fell to watching the smoke in the fireplace, and presently I thought I recognized one my old friends, the imps, in it. The next moment there was no doubt of it, and I set to work at once to draw his por-

trait. I gave him a hoof on one leg, and a legitimate foot on the other. He had a long, black, anchor-pointed tail. His eyes were very large and glaring. He had long scaly claws for hands, and two pointed horns on his forehead. He was very dreadful. I gazed at the picture in awe. A veritable Frankenstein, as you shall see.

Suddenly he winked his right eye at me. His teeth showed in a diabolical grin. His claws began to twitch in a truly devilish fashion. O horror! I could stand it no longer. In an instant grandfather's pipe was dashed from his mouth and I was crying and sobbing in his arms for him to save me—to drive the fearful thing away.

It shows what a child's fancy will do. The mystery in the poorly lighted room, the magic of the curling smoke in the fireplace, the shrieking of the wind in the chimney, the loneliness of the place—you see, they all demanded in my childish imagination some sprite of fairyland. I had to scare myself—it was inevitable. After all, much of what we see, we see only in imagination. The thing is only a little stronger in the child than in us. To us the novelty of the world has, to a great extent, worn away, but to the child everything is novel—new—mysterious. It was imagination, of course, that saw the imp in the fireplace; it was imagination that put him down on paper; it was imagination that insisted on my so frightening myself. But how many times a day, do you do the same thing, only in lesser degree?

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