

## THE BEE AND THE COW.

"A GIRL who mistook a bee for a cow! She must have been an idiot," cried Godfrey. "My dear Rosamond, there never could have been such a girl! This must be some great mistake of yours."

"Now, mamma, did I not hear that gentleman say so? Mamma, it is not a great mistake of mine, is it?" cried Rosamond.

"No, only a little mistake of yours, my dear Rosamond," answered her mother. "You did hear that gentleman telling me something about a girl, and a bee, and a cow, but you are not clear in the story."

"No; because of the cherries, which distracted my attention, as you say, mamma. Will you be so good as to tell us the story, and then I shall know it clearly?"

"The fact was simply this, a lady was teaching a poor little girl, who had been constantly employed in a manufactory, to read. And one day this child was reading in a book, called 'Harry and Lucy,' an account of a girl's being stung by a bee. The child read badly, and as if she did not in the least understand what she was reading; and the lady said to her, 'I think you do not understand what you are reading.' 'No, madam, I do not.' The lady questioned the child further, and, from her answers, began to think that she had never seen a bee; and she asked the child whether she had ever seen a bee. The child answered, 'Yes, ma'am.' 'What is a bee like?' said the lady. The child answered, 'It is like a cow.'"

Godfrey, Rosamond, and even the sage Laura, laughed at this strange answer, and they wondered how it was

possible that such an idea could come into the child's head.

"It was clear," said Godfrey, "that the child had never seen a bee;" but Laura did not think this was quite certain.

"The child," she observed, "might have seen a bee without having been told the name of it."

Laura recollected having heard her mother read, in the "Monthly Magazine," a letter from a lady, who described the ignorance of some children, either in a manufactory or charity school. It was said that they did not know the names of a hog or a calf when the animals were shown to them.

"But why did the girl, when she was asked what a bee was like, say that it was like a cow?"

Godfrey and Rosamond thought that the girl said a cow only because she had nothing else to say, because it was the name of the animal that first occurred to her.

Laura thought that there was some other reason for it. Her father said, he believed he had discovered the reason; and Godfrey immediately begged that he would not tell, but that he would leave to them the pleasure of guessing, or inventing it.

"I would willingly, my dear," said his father, "but that I believe you do not know a certain fact, which is absolutely necessary to be known, Godfrey, before you could guess, or invent it. Some children, particularly some of the poorer classes, are taught their letters in picture books, as they call them; where, to each letter of the alphabet, a little picture, or, properly speaking, some print, is joined, and the thing represented usually begins with the letter to be taught, as A, for apple, C, for cut. Now, I remember to have seen in some of these little books, B, for bull; and the letter B

stands at the foot of the picture of a bull. It is a vulgar saying, meant to express that a person is ignorant, such a one does not know the letter B from a bull's foot. This saying led me to think of the cause of the child's mistake. And it appears to me, that the sound of the letter, which is pronounced like the name of the insect, bee, was joined in the child's mind with the idea, or picture, of a bull or cow. Therefore when she was asked what a bee was like, the recollection of a cow came into her head."

Godfrey, with some difficulty, understood this, and allowed it to be possible. Rosamond, who was eager to prove that the poor girl was not an idiot, comprehended her father's explanation quickly, and pronounced it very ingenious.

Still Godfrey maintained that the child must have been uncommonly silly, to have made such a mistake.

This assertion of Godfrey's led Rosamond and Laura to recollect and to mention several odd instances of their own misunderstanding of things which they had read, or heard in conversation, when they were little children.

Laura mentioned a passage in a story she once read, which appeared to her absolute nonsense, because it was badly punctuated, or because, in reading it to herself, she had stopped in the wrong place. The sentence was as follows:—

"Leonora walked on, her head a little higher than usual," which, by one method of reading it, may represent Leonora as walking on her head, and consequently being a little higher than usual.

"However absurd this mistake may seem to us now," said Laura, "I assure you it was really made."

"And not by an idiot, nor by a very silly child, either," said her mother.

Rosamond next reminded Godfrey of a mistake which he had made, but which he could now hardly believe till both his sister and his mother joined in bearing witness, and in bringing the time and place to his mind.

"Godfrey, I remember perfectly," said Rosamond, "your telling me you thought that there were two worlds; and that America was in the other, and not in this world; that is, not on this earth—not on this globe. And you thought so, because America is called the New World, and all other countries the Old World."

"It was a natural mistake for a child to make," said his mother; "and I daresay every child may recollect having made a hundred such. Sometimes, not till after people have grown up, do they discover the sense of what they learnt when they were children. I can recollect lines of poetry, which I was obliged to learn when I was a child, and which, half my life afterwards, I never understood."

"Thank goodness!" cried Rosamond, "thank your goodness, mamma, we have none of us been forced to learn poetry which we did not understand."

"But are you sure, my dears, that you have not, without being forced to do so, learnt by heart any poetry that you do not understand?" said her mother.

Rosamond answered by beginning to repeat her favourite little poem,

#### THE ROBIN'S PETITION.

WHEN the leaves had forsaken the trees,  
And the forests were chilly and bare;  
When the brooks were beginning to freeze,  
And the snow wavered fast through the air;

A robin had fled from the wood,  
To the snug habitation of man;  
On the threshold the wanderer stood,  
And thus his petition began: