



IX.

BECKONING THE CHICKENS.

BECAUSE he lives himself, the child
Oft thinks that all things live,
And pours his little heart upon —
That which no love can give.

But when his life, outreaching, meets
With answering life around,
His wistful eyes are lit with joy
That comrades he has found.

The picture illustrating this play shows clearly the mother's beckoning hand and the dear little bent fingers of the baby, who tries to imitate what she is doing. That this movement exercises and strengthens the fingers is self-evident.

This mother has doubtless heard what we said to each other as we looked at the picture of Mowing Grass. See the child in her arms. Notice his exuberant health and vigour. Notice how he keeps his eye fixed upon the turkeys, hens, and chickens, and how delightedly he listens to their gobbling, clucking, and peeping. Surely his mother has taken him out of doors in order that he may see in the looking-glass of nature the fresh, eager life that throbs in his own

pulses, and that through seeing this life outside of himself he may feel it more keenly within himself. Several groups of children, some of whom are her own, have followed the mother. Who would not follow where such motherly nurture leads the way? What child, especially, could resist its charm? Watch these children. Notice the health, the mirth, the thoughtfulness which are shown in the expression of their faces and in their movements. Look at the three little ones yonder on the right where the middle child is kneeling. The life of nature works upon them like a magnet. It works so powerfully upon the vigorous boy that he needs more sharers of his joy than the two little girls beside him; so he turns to call the three children who are looking so intently through the great branches of the tree at the picture they frame. But these children do not respond to his call; they are fascinated by the beautiful view that lies before them. And just see the child on the left! Crouched on the ground, she watches intently the chicken family, that none of its doings may escape her. The elder girl, on the contrary, stands erect, and beckons to the hen and rooster; she wants them to come to their chickens. In her stir the motherly impulses of watchfulness and care.

Each child has a vision of his own inmost life in the mirror of nature. This inmost life gains fresh strength through beholding its reflection. So, too, the child sees his life in the mirror of his mother's eye.

Surely all these children will grow up in strength and beauty like the luxuriant climbing vine in our picture, and in their mature years they will stand steadfast like the tree under whose shade they are now rejoicing in the life of nature!