

dise Lost' to the girls, and give them a sketch of the Life, with a Note or two. Mr. M. (the matmaker) has the book, sir."

Milton was fetched in a trice; and we tried the blind man in half-a-dozen places; giving him a line taken at random, wherever we pleased, and he at once giving in reply the lines that followed, as clearly and accurately as if he read every word from a book.

By working slowly, steadily, and carefully on in his odds and ends of leisure time, and going over the ground again and again, while at work, he had not only learned the "Paradise Lost" by heart, but a very large portion of Scripture, the whole of the Prayer Book Psalms, and a vast number of hymns,—to say nothing of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," and other modern poetry! Very few persons, even with sight, could ever accomplish such a holiday task, simply because few would set to work for years with such incessant, unwearied application.

"Oh," says Frank, "blind people must have extraordinary memories, — that's the reason why they can do such things."

"Yes," said I; "they have got extraordinary memories, simply because they put them to the right and the best use; and in spite of all difficulties fight their way steadily on. And see what a blind boy's difficulties are. Nearly every line he learns must be from the voice of a friend; not a book can be looked at, not a note referred to; he has to rely solely and entirely on his own wits. But watch the blind man as his friend reads to him. See how intently he listens; he is now all ear, not a word, not a syllable escapes him. He cuts off every channel of communication with the other things that

are going on about him, and gives himself up to this one work. It is this unwearied, earnest application which, after all, wins the day.

"Do not imagine for a moment that blind people have any wonderful or special aptitude for remembering things, or any unusual genius for steady work—except what practice and a strong desire to succeed bring with them. The surest sign of genius is, in fact, the power of giving your mind steadily to a single object; and, in this sense, the old proverb comes true: 'An ounce of genius is worth a pound of clever.' So, at last, the blind boy succeeds in learning by heart many and many a long page which puzzles his friend with eyes; not because his powers of memory are keener or stronger than his friend's, but mainly because he gives time and labour to the work, and puts his heart into it. Step by step, and little by little, he finds out the strength that is in him; very often by being thrown upon his own resources, and left almost alone to make the most of what he has.

"Take a few hints from the blind boy, when he sets about learning by heart. Do not attempt too much at a time. Go slowly. 'Memory,' says a wise man, 'is like a purse: if over-full that it cannot shut, all will drop out.' As for facts and dates of history, try to sift the chaff from the wheat, be content 'to let the little fishes slip through the meshes of the net, provided you save the big ones.' Don't turn so good a servant as memory into a slave; above all, never dream for a moment that you have 'No Memory.' Give it only fair play, fair exercise, and a willing heart, and some day you may rival Butler in getting up a thousand lines of 'Paradise Lost.'"

THE FIRST ALMOND-TREE.

HEARKEN to the ancient fable that tells the origin of the fair almond-tree, which breaks into bloom long ere a leaf is visible upon its naked twigs.

Many hundred years ago there reigned upon the shores of Thrace a young queen. She was fair as day; her soft brown hair rippled far down her white neck, which looked as though it had been born of snow and kissed of roses. Yet the lovely Phyllis knew little joy in her life, for it was lonely and destitute of love. Called early to fill her father's throne, born to rule over rude warlike men, in whose pursuits she felt no interest, what wonder that restlessness reigned within her breast?

Perplexed and dreamy, she was pacing the sea-shore one summer evening, watching the wavelets as they rippled at her feet, and sparkled in diamond flashes in the light of the setting sun.

"Dione," said the young queen to her favourite handmaiden, "we shall have a storm to-morrow, mark my word. See that dark streak of red 'neath Phœbus' car, and note the deceptive stillness of the water. Ah! would that storm, sunshine, or cold ever broke in upon the stillness of my life!" she sighed.

"The night falls apace, let us return within," said Dione, who knew not how to deal with her mistress when in these strange moods.