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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

A Country Road

Mrs. William Starr Dana

I have taken a walk along a country road which was bright with flowers of many kinds, where lovely-colored butterflies and buzzing bees were hard at work hunting for sweet stuff, where birds were singing in the trees as they watched their nests, where a rabbit would dart from the bushes close by, and a squirrel would scold at me from overhead,—where, in short, there was so much to look at and delight in, that I could hardly make up my mind to keep on to my journey's end, instead of stopping to see if I knew the names of all the flowers, to admire the queer, bright-colored little patterns on the wing of the butterfly which was resting on a neighboring blossom, and to find out what sort of eggs were in the nest that I knew must be near at hand, for the mother bird let out her secret by her frightened clucking.

Well, I have taken just such a walk; and on going into the house I have felt as if I were obliged to put aside a book of enchanting fairy stories, or rather as if I were turning my back on fairyland itself, with all its wonderful sights and sounds and adventures.

And then what has happened?

Why, some child (it has not always been a child) has come in, and I have said, "Was not that a fine walk? What did you see along that lovely road?"

Now, if he was a boy (for I want to be quite fair), he probably had seen the rabbit and given it chase; and it is more than likely that he had stopped long enough to chuck a stone at the squirrel; and if the mother bird had not finished with her foolish chatter, I fear he gave her some evil moments by hunting for her nest, with no good intentions. But if, fortunately for them, he had met none of these creatures, he probably looked at me in surprise, and answered by look, if not by words, "No, I thought it a long, stupid walk. I did not see a thing."

And if it was a girl, I fear the answer, silent or spoken, was much the same.

Now, I say that boy or girl must have been partly blind to have missed seeing those wonderful flowers, and butterflies, and bees, and birds, and many other interesting things which I have not time here to tell about. Certainly they were not using their eyes properly; and the longer they go about in such a way more worthy of a bat than of a well-made child, the more useless and bat-like will their eyes become.

It is really more natural for a child to use his eyes constantly than it is for an older person. The grown-up man or woman is likely to have so many things to think about, that eyes and brain do not always work together, and so the surroundings are not noticed.

For every boy knows that if his head is full of the ball game he is going to play, he runs along without eyes or thoughts for other things.

And every girl knows that if she is on her way to some friend to whom she has a secret to tell, she is in such haste to reach her journey's end, and is so busy thinking what her friend will have to say about it all, that of course there is no time to pay attention to anything else. Her eyes may be in good working order, yet they are not of much use unless her brain is ready to help them; and that little brain just now is too busy with its secret.

No, by the people who are half blind I mean only those who much of the time use neither eyes nor brain, who can neither tell you what they have seen nor what they have been thinking about. Sometimes it seems as if such people were not only half blind, it seems as if they were only half alive.



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