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Mary Henry Diary, 1864-1868

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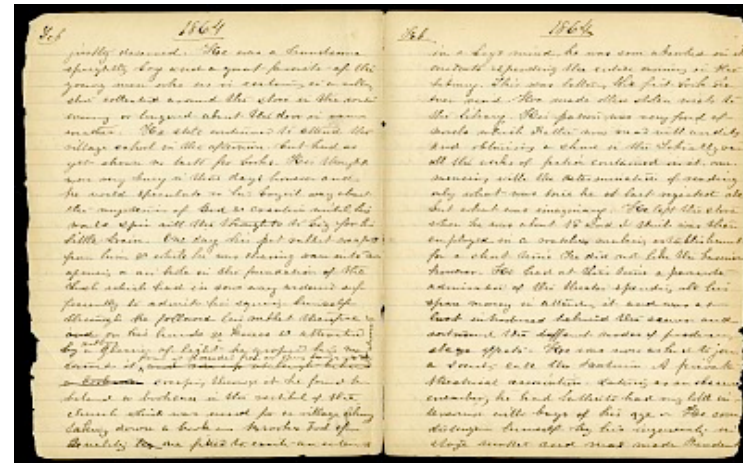
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Feb
1864
 justly deserved. He was a handsome sprightly boy and a great favorite of the young men who as is [[customarily?]] in a [[valley]] store collected around the stove in the winter evening or lingered about the door in warm weather. He still continued to attend the village school in the afternoon, but had as yet shown no taste for books. His thoughts were very busy in those days however and he would speculate in his boyish way about the mysteries of God & Creation until his would spin with the thoughts so big for his little brain. One day his pet rabbit escaped from him & while he was chasing ran into an opening or air hole in the foundation of the church which had in some way widened sufficiently to admit his squeezing himself through he followed his rabbit therefore ~~on his hands & knees~~ and attracted by a [^][[?]] glimmer of light he groped his way towards it. [^][[found it proceeded from an opening leading into the church]] ~~and rose up at length behind a bookcase~~ ~~creeping through it he found~~ ~~him?~~ behind a bookcase in the vestibul of the church which was used for a village library taking down a book - Brooks Fool of Quality ~~one fitted to excite an interest~~
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1864
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 in a boy's mind, he was soon absorbed in its contents spending the entire morning in the library. This was ~~the~~ ^{litterly?} the first book he ever read. He made other stolen visits to the library. His patron was very fond of novels which Father now read with avidity and obtaining a share in the Library read all the works of fiction contained in it commencing with the determination of reading only what was true he at last rejected all but what was imaginary. He left the store when he was about 15 and I think was then employed in a watch~~es~~ making establishment for a short time He did not like the business however. He had at this time a passionate admiration of the theater spending all his spare money in attending it and was at last introduced behind the scenes and witnessed the different modes of producing stage effects. He was now asked to join a society call the Rostrum. A private theatrical association. Entering as an obscure member, he had hitherto had very little intercourse with boys of his age - He soon distinguished himself by his ingenuity in stage matters and was made President
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