

Young People's Department.



THE RIVER.

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SOMETIMES if you follow the course of a ravine you will see, as you notice its high banks on both sides, with perhaps a little rivulet running between them, that it must have been once the course of a river, and this makes it evident that rivers that once existed, have ceased to be. We are told that the miners who are working in the gold mines of California, are, in their search for gold, excavating the bed of a mighty river which, far back in distant ages, rolled on to the sea; that it took its rise at the base of some enormous hill full of gold; that some mighty upheaving threw it all into a heap of golden gravel, which the ancient river carried down in its course by degrees, till its whole bed was filled up, and there to-day the miners are working. How long ago was that? Who dare say when it was that that huge golden mountain was standing and that ancient river sweeping on in its mysterious way? What were the animals that came to satisfy their thirst at its brink and gaze across its water? Strange creatures, no doubt they were, now lost and gone like the ancient river itself. So have rivers passed away, so doubtless will others disappear, however slow the process may be, and it will be slow, the work, indeed, of ages,—yet doubtless others will take their places, for rivers must ever belong to the face of the earth. We read of them first in Genesis and last in Revelation. What more beautiful thing on earth is there than a large river? It winds on

its way silently, sometimes through enormous stretches of country, sometimes through the forests, where the tall trees almost entirely shut out the rays of the sun from its limpid waters, sometimes through the prairies where buffaloes, beavers and trappers alone gaze upon its beauties, sometimes through the wild regions where rocks abound, forming high walls to the right and left as in the canyon or the fjord, sometimes through the corn patches and wheat fields making its way with continued, restless motion till it finds its way to the sea.

This idea of the river making its way through different scenes has been well presented by a master hand in this way: At first it is a little, babbling stream, clear and cool and sparkling, the very picture of purity. Then, as it gains strength it winds its way "by laughing shallow and dreaming pool," now passing in gentle play under the trees and past the crags and perhaps under the wall where the church-bell rings. But it passes on till it reaches some forbidding place, and here its pure waters become "dank and foul." It passes the "smoky town, the foul sewer and the slimy banks,—

"Darker and darker the further it goes,
Baser and baser the richer it goes,"

so foul that we shrink from it as a thing defiled. But the river makes its way again through these impurities and hurries on, "free and strong," pure once more, away to the sea, with its muddy foulness left behind.

And is not all this very like the picture of human life? At first there is the sweet innocence of childhood, when everything is pure;