

AUNT MARY'S SUGGESTION.

"John!" Thomas Belknap spoke in a firm rather authoritative voice. It was evident that he anticipated some reluctance on the boy's part.

John, a lad between twelve and thirteen years of age, was seated on the doorstep, reading. A slight movement of the body indicated that he heard; but he did not make any response.

"John!" This time the voice of Thomas Belknap was loud, sharp, and imperative. "Father," responded the boy, dropping the volume in his lap, and looking up with a slightly flushed but sullen face.

"Didn't you hear me when I first spoke?" said Thomas Belknap, angrily.

"Yes, father."

"Then why didn't you answer me? Always respond when you are spoken to. I'm tired of this ill-mannered, disrespectful way of yours."

The boy stood up, looking now dogged as well as sullen.

"Go and do what I tell you. Get your hat and jacket."

The boy moved slowly, and with a very reluctant air, from the room.

"Now don't be all day," Thomas Belknap called after him; "I'm in a hurry. Move briskly."

How powerless the father's words died upon the air! The motions of John were not in the least quickened. He passed out into the passage and up the stairs, while the impatient Thomas Belknap could with difficulty restrain an impulse to follow after and hasten the sulky boy's movements with blows. He controlled himself, however, and resumed the perusal of his newspaper.

Five, ten minutes passed, and John had not yet appeared to do the errand upon which his father designed to send him. Suddenly Thomas Belknap dropped his paper, and going hastily to the bottom of the stairs, called out—

"You John, John!"

"Father," replied John.

"Didn't I tell you to hurry?"

"I can't find my jacket."

"You don't want to find it. Where did you lay it when you took it off last night?"

"I don't know. I forgot."

"If you're not down here with your jacket on in one minute, I'll warm your shoulders well for you."

Thomas Belknap was quite in earnest in this threat, a fact plainly enough apparent to John in the tone of his father's voice. The boy opened a closet, and, singularly enough, there hung his jacket in full view. At the expiration of the minute, he was standing before his father with his jacket on, and buttoned up to the chin.

"Where's your hat?" asked Thomas Belknap.

"I don't know, father."

"Well, find it then."

"I've looked everywhere."

"Look again. There; what is that on the hat rack just under my coat?"

The boy answered not, but walked moodily to the rack and took his hat therefrom.

"Ready at last. I am out of all patience with your slow movements and sulky manner. What do you stand there for, knitting your brows and pouting your lips?"

The lad, thus angrily roused, made a feeble effort to throw a few rays of sunshine into his face. But the effort died fruitless. All was too dark, sullen, and rebellious within his bosom.

"See here," Thomas Belknap still spoke in that peculiar tone of command which always stifles self respect in the one to whom it is addressed.

"Do you go down to Leslie's and tell him to send me a good claw hammer and three pounds of eightpenny nails. And go quickly."

The boy turned off without a word, and was slowly moving away, when his father said sharply.

"Look here, sir."

John paused and looked back.

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes, father."

"What did I tell you to do?"

"Go get a claw hammer and three pounds of eightpenny nails."

"Very well. Why didn't you indicate in some way that you heard me? Haven't I already this morning read you a lecture about this very thing? Now go quickly; I'm in a hurry."

For all this impatience and authority on the part of Thomas Belknap, John

moved away at a snail's pace. And as the former, in a state of considerable irritability, gazed after the boy, he felt strongly tempted to call him back and give him a good flogging in order that he might clearly comprehend the fact of his being in earnest.

"If that stubborn and incorrigible boy returns in half an hour it will be wonder," muttered Thomas Belknap, as he came back into the sitting room. "I wish I knew what to do with him. I never saw such a boy. He knows that I'm in a hurry, and yet he goes creeping along like a tortoise. What is to be done with him, Aunt Mary?"

Thomas Belknap turned as he spoke to an elderly lady with a mild, open face, and clear blue eyes. She was a valued relative, who was staying him a brief visit.

Aunt Mary let her knitting rest in her lap, and turned her eyes upon the speaker.

"What is to be done with that boy, Aunt Mary?" Thomas Belknap repeated his words. "I've tried everything with him."

"Have you tried—"

Aunt Mary paused, and seemed half in doubt whether it was best to give utterance to what was in her mind.

"Tried what?" asked Thomas Belknap.

"May I speak plainly?" said Aunt Mary.

"To me! why, yes! the plainer the better."

"Have you tried a kind, affectionate, unimpassioned manner with the boy? Since I have been here I notice that you speak to him in a cold, authoritative tone. Under such treatment, some natures that soften quickly in the sunshine of affection grow hard and stubborn."

The blood mounted to the cheeks and brow of Thomas Belknap.

"Forgive me if I've spoken too plainly," said Aunt Mary.

Thomas Belknap did not make any response for some time, but sat with his eyes upon the floor, in hurried self-examination.

"No, Aunt Mary, not too plainly," said he, as he looked at her with a sobered face. "I needed that suggestion, and thank you for it."

"Mrs. Howitt has a line which beautifully expresses what I mean," said Aunt Mary, in her gentle, earnest way. "It is—

'For love hath reader will than fear.'

Ah, if we could all comprehend the wonderful power of love! It is the fire that melts, while fear only smites, the strokes hardening or breaking its unsightly fragments. John has many good qualities, that ought to be made as active as possible. These, like goodly flowers growing in a carefully tilled garden, will absorb the latent vitality in his mind, and thus leave nothing from which inherent evil tendencies can draw nutrition."

Aunt Mary said no more, and Thomas Belknap's thoughts were soon busy with a new train of ideas.

Time moved steadily on. Nearly half an hour had elapsed, in which period John might have gone twice to Leslie's shop and returned, yet he was still absent. Thomas Belknap was particularly in want of the hammer and nails, and the delay chafed him very considerably; the more particularly as it evidenced the indifference of his son in respect to his wishes and commands. Sometimes he would yield to a momentary blinding flush of anger and resolve to punish the boy severely the moment he could get his hands on him. But quickly would come in Aunt Mary's suggestion, and he would again resolve to try the power of kind words. He was also a good deal strengthened in his purpose by the fact that Aunt Mary's eyes would be upon him at the return of John. After her suggestion and his acknowledgment of his value, it would hardly do for him to let passion so rule him as to act in open violation of what was right—to wrong his son by unwise treatment, when he professed to desire only his good.

The fact is, Thomas Belknap had already made the discovery that if he would govern his boy he must first govern himself. This was not an easy task. Yet he felt that it must be done.

"There comes that boy now," said he, as he glanced forth, and saw John coming homeward at a very deliberate pace. There was more of impatience in his tone of voice than he wished to betray to Aunt Mary, who let her beautiful eyes rest for a moment or two, penetratingly, upon him. The balancing power of that look was needed; and at performed its work.

Soon after, the loitering boy came in; he had a package of nails in his hand, which he reached, half indifferently, to his father.

"The hammer!" John started with a half-frightened air.

"Indeed, father, I forgot all about it!" said he looking up with a flushed countenance, in which genuine regret was plainly visible.

"I'm sorry," said Thomas Belknap, in a disappointed, but not angry or rebuking voice. "I've been waiting a long time for you to come back, and now I must go to the shop without nailing up that trellis for your mother's honeysuckle, as I promised her."

The boy looked at his father a moment or two with an air of bewilderment and surprise; then he said, earnestly, "Just wait a little, father; I'll run down to the shop and get it for you in a minute; I'm very sorry that I forgot it."

"Run then," said Thomas Belknap, kindly.

How fleetly the lad bounded away! His father gazed after him with an emotion of surprise not unmingled with pleasure.

"Yes, yes," he murmured, half aloud, "Mrs. Howitt never uttered a wiser saying. 'For love hath reader will than fear.'"

Quicker than even Aunt Mary, whose faith in kind words were very strong, had expected John came in with a hammer, a bright glow on his cheeks, and a sparkle in his eyes that strongly contrasted with the utter want of interest displayed in his manner a little while before.

"Thank you, my son," said Thomas Belknap, as he took the hammer; "I could not have asked a prompter service." He spoke very kindly, and in a voice of approval.

"And now, John," he added with the manner of one who requests rather than commands, "if you will go to Frank Wilson's and tell him to come over and work for two or three days in our garden, you will oblige me. I was going to call there as I went to the shop this morning; but it is too late now."

"Oh, I'll go, father—I'll go," replied the boy, cheerfully. "I'll run right over at once."

"Do, if you please," said Thomas Belknap, now speaking from an impulse of real kindness, for a thorough change had come over his feelings. A grateful look was cast by John into his father's face, and then he was off to do his errand. Thomas Belknap saw and understood the meaning of that look.

"Yes, yes, yes"—thus he talked with himself as he took his way to the shop—"Aunt Mary and Mrs. Howitt are right. Love hath a reader will. I ought to have learned this lesson earlier. Ah! how much that is deformed in this self-willed boy might now be growing in beauty!"

British Workman.

HOW TO ENJOY YOUR CLASS.

"Can you tell me how I can better enjoy my class?"—Waldo Abbot says he never knew an unprepared teacher who enjoyed teaching, nor one who was well prepared who did not enjoy it. A deacon in Chicago, a few years ago, began a Bible class with thirty members. At the end of the second year, it numbered three hundred and fifty. Some one asked him:—

"What is your philosophy of teaching?"

"What is that? Oh, you mean how I do it. Well, as soon as one lesson is through, I read over the next and pray over it, then I think about it and pray over it some more, and by the end of the week I get so I must teach the lesson or I shall die."

Those who study the lesson in that way will enjoy their classes.—*Well-Spring.*

"ONLY."

From "only" one word many quarrels begin.

And "only this once" leads to many a sin;

"Only a penny" wastes many a pound;

"Only once more" and the diver was drowned;

"Only one drop" many drunkards hath made;

"Only a play," many gamblers have said;

"Only a cold" opens many a grave;

"Only resist" many evils will save.

—*Youth's Temperance Banner.*

HINTS TO TEACHERS ON THE CURRENT LESSONS.

(From Peloubet's Select Notes)

February 10.—Acts 15: 11-24.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

1. Refusing to open the heart. Dr. Arnold used to tell a story of a poor woman in his congregation who was unable to pay her rent, and her goods were about to be seized and taken from her. Hearing of it, the good pastor procured the money necessary to relieve her, and went to place it in her old long, received no answer. He tried the door, but it was fastened. Unable to gain admittance, he went away. Next day he met the woman and told her of his visit and its object, and how he had knocked and knocked, but could not get in. With mingled astonishment and confusion she said, "Why? was that you? I heard the knocking, but I thought it was the officer coming to seize my goods, and I had fastened the doors and windows, and was bound I would not let him in." In like manner, Jesus comes to bring us blessings, riches, joys; comes to pay our debts for us, and take our burdens. But we misunderstand Him, and refuse to let him into our hearts. We close and bar the door against our best friend.—*Westminster Teacher.*

PRACTICAL.

1. Ver. 13. Although Lydia attended to her business, she did not allow it to occupy her whole heart and absorb all her time. She took advantage of the Sabbath to rest awhile from labor; and her time of rest she filled with the worship of God, and the society of the good. He who lays out one talent well will get it redoubled soon.—*Arnold.*

2. Note the usefulness and power of women in the Church. The great church at Philippi grew out of a little prayer-meeting of a few women.

3. The Gospel is to be preached not only in the pulpit, but by the wayside, in the street, the parlor, the workshop.

4. Ver. 14. By using well the religious light she had, Lydia was prepared for greater light and larger blessings.

5. God opens the heart (1) by leading us to receive and use even the smallest measure of grace; (2) by the direct influence of His spirit; (3) by His providence; (4) by sincere worship.

6. Ver. 15. Those who believe on Christ should publicly confess Christ.

7. Hospitality is one of the earliest Christian virtues.

8. Bad men are willing to make their gains out of the misfortunes and follies, and to the injury of others.

9. Ver. 17. Even bad men and demons must perceive that the Gospel is for the saving of men.

10. Ver. 18. But the Gospel is not aided by their testimony.

11. The Gospel interferes with the business and money-making schemes of bad men.

12. Ver. 19. Therefore bad men are opposed to the Gospel.

13. Ver. 21. But they cloak their opposition under false pretences.

14. Vers. 22-24. Good men often suffer for the sake of the Gospel, thus proving to the world their sincerity, and the value they put upon the Gospel they preach. If it is worth while for Christians to suffer in order to give the Gospel to men, it must be worth while for them to receive the Gospel.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

We find in this lesson three effects of the Gospel. (1) The first effect was the conversion of the soul (vers. 11-15.) Show the steps of Lydia's conversion; the preparation for it; how God opened her heart, and the two results,—confession in baptism, and good works. Contrast her conversion with that of Paul, and show that conversion in this gentle and quiet way are as real and blessed as those that are more demonstrative. (2) The second effect was the helping of the distressed (vers. 16-18.) The Gospel ever helps and comforts in all diseases and distresses. (3) The third effect was the opposition of bad men (vers. 19-24.) The Gospel always interferes with bad business and dishonest gains, and hence men oppose it, but cloak their opposition under professions of peace, and "law and order."