

## THE MESSENGER.

When yours is the only visible gun, and Jim began mechanically picking at the flowers near him, wondering what he should do next. Sissie and Ethel were reading some way off. Nobody was in sight. He determined to be a burglar. The forest should be changed to a castle, and the flowers should be stolen goods. Jim knew Sissie had said, 'Don't pick the flowers,' but then Sissie's 'don'ts' were many, and Jim was apt to disregard them. So the flowers were gathered, and thrown away, and more picked. The castle was rapidly becoming dismantled, when suddenly before the astonished little burglar, the ogre of this enchanted castle appeared. In theory, Jim knew that a burglar should show fight, and escape in a marvellous manner. But Jim did not bring this knowledge into practice. He stood, a very shamefaced and terrified little boy, before the awful figure of a policeman, for to a mind of eight years the policeman is a very terrible personality, something more than human. It is only the mind of riper years, which sinks the function, and thinks only of the man.

'Don't you know that gathering wild flowers is against the rules, young man?' said the awful voice of the law. 'If you do that, you'll spend some time in the lock-up. Who are you with?'

Poor Jim, too terrified to speak, pointed to Sissie and Ethel in the distance. The policeman seized him by the arm, and led back the small culprit. 'If I catch this young gentleman breaking the rules again, I shall take him in charge. So you'll please notice him, miss;' and the awful policeman stalked away.

'Well, Jim, I am only surprised he did not take you straight off to prison,' said Sissie. 'I quite expected he was going to.'

'I don't think, after all, burglar-ing can be very exciting,' Jim confided afterwards to a small friend, 'especially if you are caught.'

—'Our Darlings.'

### Annie's Question.

Jack and Annie were having a holiday by the sea-shore. Many children know what that means—would that all did! How they enjoyed it! They waded in the sparkling water; they gathered shells, yellow like gold, or shining 'silver buckles' as they called them; they had famous romps among the

fishing boats drawn up on the shore; they built great castles of sand for the waves to wash away, or they played 'shops,' and weighed out sand for flour or sugar, or made 'houses' with the pebbles, and adorned them with their finest shells.

The days were not half long enough for all their pleasures. One morning, along with some of their little friends, they were building a 'house' which was to be finer than any they had made yet. All had brought their prettiest shells, but the most beautiful of all was one which little Mary Burns had found. It was the envy of all the children, it was so large, so finely marked, and had such a delicate pink lining. Jack especially coveted it, as he was making a collection of shells, and he had offered foreign stamps, pencils, all sorts of things in exchange for it in vain. Mary would not part with it. To-day he looked longingly at it as it lay on the sand, and when the children jumped up to look at a passing steamer, his hand stole out, and almost before he knew what he had done, the shell was in his pocket. He rose, and before Mary had noticed her loss, walked away along the shore. In a moment there was a cry from the group, and Annie's feet came pattering after him.

'Oh, Jack! why have you taken Mary's shell? She is so proud of it. It's too bad to tease her.'

Jack thrust his hands into his knicker pockets.

'Mind your own business. How do you know I've got Mary's shell?'

'I saw you lift it, Jack. You don't mean to keep it? Oh, Jack, you wouldn't!'

'What's that to you?' roughly.

'But, Jack, that would be wrong. It would vex Jesus! Is it worth vexing Him for a shell.'

In Jack and Annie's home, the name of Jesus was not a strange one. The children had been taught that an angry word or a selfish action would vex Jesus, as little Annie said, even more than father and mother. As the child uttered her simple question, the shell seemed to burn in Jack's hand. He drew it out, and without a word, went back and laid it in Mary's lap. She stopped crying, and soon all were busy with their game again; all but Jack, who wandered away along the shore, thinking of Annie's words.

And he never forgot them. Long afterwards, when all that was left

of little Annie was a treasured curl of fair hair and her gentle memory, that question would rise up again in Jack's mind. At school and in business, fighting his way in the world, amid many temptations, he seemed to hear his sister's voice again. For a glass of whisky, a night of pleasure, a jolly spree, as his comrades called it, would he vex Jesus? Were any or all of those things worth grieving his best Friend? Annie's blue eyes seemed to look again into his, the childish voice rang again in his ears, 'Is it worth vexing Him for that?' and Jack would put the temptation aside, as he had given back the coveted shell, which had nearly made him a thief long years ago.

Try the same plan, children, if you are tempted to do anything wrong. Ask yourselves Annie's question, and if you do, it will keep you safe from many little temptations now, and the bigger, stronger ones you will be sure to meet when you grow older. Above all, if you are tempted by strong drink, and the glass is pressed into your hand, ask yourself; 'Is it worth vexing Jesus by taking this, which can neither make me braver, nor stronger, nor better?' and I am sure you will say 'No, it is not worth so much;' and you will set down the glass and resolve to have no more to do with it.—'Adviser.'

### The Light That Is elt.

A tender child of summers three,  
Seeking her little bed at night  
Paused on the dark stair timidly,  
'O, mother! take my hand,' said she,  
'And then the dark will all be light.'

We older children grope our way,  
From dark behind to dark before;  
And only when our hands we lay;  
Dear Lord, in Thine—the night is  
day.

And there is darkness never more.

Reach downward to the sunless  
days,  
Wherein our guides are blind as we;  
And faith is small, and hope delays.  
Take Thou the hands of prayer we  
raise,

And let us feel the light of Thee.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

Might I give counsel to any young hearer, I would say to him: Try to frequent the company of your betters. In books and life that is the most wholesome society; learn to admire rightly; the great pleasure of life is that.—Thackeray.