

The Vagabonds.

John Townsend Trowbridge, the author of "The Vagabonds," is best known as the writer of stories for boys. He has produced over twenty books of this nature, many of which have been very successful, and three volumes of poetry. "The Vagabonds" is his best-known poem. He is now in his seventy-second year, and is a resident of Arlington, Mass.

We are two travellers, Roger and I
Roger's my dog.—Come here, you scamp!
Jump for the gentleman—mind your eye!
Over the table, look out for the lamp!
The rogue is growing a little old;
Five years we've tramped through wind and weather,
And slept out-doors when nights were cold,
And ate and drank and starved together.

We've learned what comfort is, I tell you!
A bed on the floor, a bit of rosin,
A fire to thaw our thumbs (poor fellow!
The paw he hold's out there's been frozen),
Plenty of catgut for my fiddle
(This out door business is bad for strings),
Then a few nice buckwheats hot from the griddle,
And Roger and I set up for kings!

No, thank ye, sir,—I never drink;
Roger and I are exceedingly moral,—
Aren't we, Roger?—See him wink!
Well, something hot, then,—we won't quarrel.
He's thirsty, too,—see him nod his head?
What a pity, sir, that dogs can't talk!
He understands every word that's said,—
And knows good milk from water and chalk.

The truth is, sir, now I reflect,
I've been so sadly given to grog,
I wonder I've not lost the respect
(Here's to you, sir!) even of my dog.
But he sticks by, through thick and thin,
And this old coat with its empty pockets,
And rags that smell of tobacco and gin,
He'll follow while he has eyes in his sockets.

There isn't another creature living
Would do it, and prove, through every disaster,
So fond, so faithful, and so forgiving,
To such a miserable, thankless master!
No, sir!—see him wag his tail and grin!
By George!—it makes my old eyes water!
That is, there's something in this gin
That chokes a fellow. But no matter!

We'll have some music, if you're willing,
And Roger (hem! what a plague a cough is, sir!)
shall march a little—Start, you villain!
Paws up! Eyes front! Salute your officer!
'Bout face! Attention! Take your rifle!
(Some dogs have arms, you see!) Now hold your
Cap while the gentlemen give a trifle,
To aid a poor old patriot soldier!

March! Halt! Now show how the rebel shakes
When he stands up to hear his sentence.
Now tell us how many drams it takes
To honour a jolly new acquaintance.
Five yelps,—that's five; he's mighty knowing!
The night's before us, fill the glasses!—
Quick, sir! I'm ill,—my brain is going!
Some brandy,—thank you,—there!—it passes!

Why not reform! That's easily said,
But I've gone through such wretched treatment,
Sometimes forgetting the taste of bread,
And scarce remembering what meat meant,
That my poor stomach's past reform,
And there are times when, mad when thinking,
I'd sell out heaven for something warm
To prop a horrible inward sinking.

Is there a way to forget to think?
At your age, sir, home, fortune, friends,
A dear girl's love,—but I took to drink:
The same old story; you know how it ends.

If you could have seen these classic features,—
You needn't laugh, sir; they were not then
Such a burning libel on God's creatures;
I was one of your handsome men!

If you had seen her, so fair and young,
Whose head was happy on this breast!

If you could have heard the song I sung
When the wine went round, you wouldn't have guessed
That ever I, sir, should be straying
From door to door, with fiddle and dog,
Ragged and penniless, and playing
To you to night for a glass of grog!

She's married since a parson's wife,
'Twas better for her that we should part,—
Better the soberest, prosiest life,
Than a blasted homo and a broken heart.

I have seen her? Onco, I was weak and spent
On a dusty road, a carriage stopped,
But little she dreamed, as on she went,
Who kissed the coin that her fingers dropped!

You've set me talking, sir; I'm sorry;
It makes me wild to think of the change!

What do you care for a beggar's story?
Is it amusing? you find it strange?
I had a mother so proud of me!
'Twas well she died before—Do you know
If the happy spirits in heaven can see
The ruin and wretchedness here below?

Another glass, and strong, to deaden
This pain, then Roger and I will start.
I wonder, has he such a lumpish, leaden,
Aching thing in place of a heart?
He is sad sometimes and would weep, if he could,

No doubt remembering things that were,—
A virtuous kennel, with plenty of food,
And himself a sober, respectable cur.

I'm better now; that glass was warming.—
You rascal! limber your lazy feet!
We must be fiddling and performing
For supper and bed, or starve in the street!

Not a very gay life to lead, you think?
But soon we'll go where lodgings are free,
And the sleepers need neither victuals nor drink:—
The sooner the better for Roger and me!

A BOY OF TO-DAY

BY

Julia MacNair Wright.

Author of "The House on the Bluff," etc.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST-FRUITS.

In this world of quiet beauty which surrounded the humble happiness of the Sinnet farm Heman Leslie lived, grew, and was glad. Once, in an hour of confidence, leaning on Aunt Espey's knees, he asked her if she thought the little boys in heaven were any happier than he was, and if she did not think that his father and mother were glad that he had stayed behind when they went to the good land.

"You can make them more glad still," said Aunt Espey, "if they hear that you are so good and useful that this world is better and happier because you are in it. If people go to heaven and say that you helped them to get there, then they will thank God for you, because the citizens of heaven are glad of the good done on earth."

"And can I be a citizen of heaven?" asked the boy.

"Yes, surely. Don't you know that Abraham, while he was in this world, was always seeking a better country, higher up, and trying to live in the fashion of that better land?"

In this way before Heman the earthly and the heavenly were knit together. Without any especial help at home, except his general training in diligence and obedience, Heman did well at school. Sometimes Urias was troubled with a fear that Heman was "getting too much education," but he reflected that in these days people "appeared to need more than they had when he was a boy," and then Joey Clump was kept at school, and Heman ought to do as well as Joey Clump. Joey was Heman's class-mate, lagging along a little for his younger friend to help him in lessons as in physical activities. Joey, in spite of his infirmities, was becoming tough and healthy, his future began to occupy him, and he planned that whatever Heman did he would do, and they would be partners. Joey's chief trouble in life was that out of school Heman spent so much time with the nimble, driving Urias; and it was quite hopeless for Joey to try to keep up with either of them, he was obliged to fall back on the so-

ciety of Dolly, his adopted sister—a rosy, tiny little maiden, who wore ruffled gingham aprons every week-day but Saturday, and then in the afternoon came out resplendent in a white pinafore and a blue hair-ribbon.

Two important factors entered into Heman's education in these early days. Aunt Espey's eyes were failing, even the large print of her big Bible tired them, and Heman was daily called upon to read the Scriptures to her. It never occurred to him to feel this a burden; it was the least he could do to minister to the good aunt. In the school he might fall into that sing-song, droning style of reading too current in country schools; his reading from the Bible aloud to Aunt Espey rescued him from that, and made him a clear, accurate, sympathetic reader. Whoever practices reading in the Psalms, the Gospel of John, Proverbs, and the Epistles to the Hebrews, cannot fail to read well.

The pastor of the Sinnets had not ceased to take an interest in their adopted son, and fearing lest the fewness of books in the home, and Urias' jealousy of educational privileges, might dwarf the lad, had persuaded Drexley and Mrs. Clump each to subscribe for a young people's magazine. The two being read and exchanged between the homes, the two boys were supplied with information and fresh mental interests. Urias himself liked to hear these magazines "read out."

Of all his companions Heman still found Urias the most congenial. In spite of his hard early life, Urias carried into his mature age much of boyishness; there was still a suggestion of childhood in the hard-faced, hard-handed man. Urias liked to chat and tell stories; he enjoyed conundrums and jokes. Every year he eagerly secured an almanac or two—usually from the druggist for nothing—and the jokes, puns, and fun in these were an endless source of amusement. On long, cold evenings of early winter Urias would take down a succession of these almanacs running through several years, and he and Heman would go over the jokes together with great satisfaction. Aunts Drexley and Espey would smile serenely, but not be able to see very much fun in it. Gravely and calmly happy, Drexley and Espey had never been children; the cares of maturity had fallen upon both almost in infancy; it never occurred to them to spend an autumn day or two gathering nuts, and to crack these nuts in winter evenings; they never thought it entertaining to thread an apple on a wire, and roast it in that way before the coals. "Land sakes!" Aunt Drexley would say, "if you want apples, I can bake you a whole pan full in the oven without that trouble."

"They're sweeter for this trouble, ain't they, Heman?" said Urias with a laughing glint in his eyes, and Heman said, "Yes," even when the apples were a little black in some spots and a little hard in others.

It was to Heman that Urias confided his longing after riches, his dreams of a fortune. These had haunted his life, and by them he had been sometimes betrayed into financial follies. Wandering agents had lured good ten-dollar bills out of his pockets for their treasures, or even double that amount for the privilege of being agent himself, and of these investments Uncle Urias wished to hear nothing. In very dark corners of the cellar were certain queer forms that Uncle Urias would have been glad to have butted out of sight and memory forever. There was a patent medicine that had endangered the life of a neighbour or two, a liniment which had left hairless spaces on Drexley's best cow; a hinge that would not work, a gate that would neither open nor shut. Over these things friendship drew a veil.

"But, then, boy," Urias would say, as he and Heman worked at the wood-pile or in the barn, "plenty of people have fortunes left 'em, and why shouldn't I? There's many a poor man who finds coal, oil, gas, copper, iron, or gold on his barren little farm. Why can't diamonds turn up here as well as in Africa, I say? Drexley might sit in a satin frock and do nothing all day long."

"I don't guess she'd enjoy that," said Heman. "I wouldn't, I'd rather stir round. What do we want a fortune for, Uncle Urias? We've got enough."

"Oh, well—we could help the church—" "That's the Lord's, and if he wants us to help that more he'll see to it, won't he? I don't know what I want more than I've got, unless it's a new pair of overalls and a new jack-knife and, well, an' some dumplings for dinner; and I've got most money laid up enough for the overalls," for Heman earned pennies and nickels very often, husking corn, or driving sheep, or picking fruit for neighbours.

"Well, after all, there's nothing like contentment," said Urias. Then he added slowly,

"I can sharpen your knife good as new, and as far as I know I can plan for dumplings for dinner. So come to find out, you don't want any thing."

Urias was full of wise saws, the essence of ancient wisdom, and of up-to-date modern acts, the very essence of unwise wisdom.

Happy were the days when the ten-year-old Heman could go out with Urias for work at carpentry. If the working-place was near enough they walked, each with some tools over his shoulder and a dinner pail in hand. If the place were distant they rode on the rude vehicle called a "buck-board," on which they were easily dandled up and down while the dinner-pails swung beneath between the wheels. Heman could nail on lath, could hold the boards for his uncle to nail, could run up and down ladder and skip along rafters, nimble as a squirrel. Many was the good lesson he got on honesty in work and faithfulness in things out of human sight no crooked rusty nails, no neglected nail holes, no rotten boards, no sills left weak, no beams untrue. "The Lord is particular, and he's our Master-Workman," Urias would say.

(To be continued.)

SEA URCHINS.

BY ADELBERT P. CALDWELL.

Last summer Willie was spending some months by the seashore.

However hard the doctors might try they couldn't straighten the little crooked back. Yet every one was so kind and thoughtful of his pleasure he forgot at times that he couldn't run, row, dig clams, and swim, as did the other little boys, sons of the sturdy fishermen.

As Willie lay in his hammock on a bright, warm morning, watching the tin-breakers tumble over each other on the sand, Tom, a barefooted fisher boy, came hurrying up the garden path.

He touched his ragged, visorless cap politely. "Say, don't you want to play ball—we're one short? It's lots of fun, an' we'd be stavin' glad to have you!"

Willie smiled just a bit sadly, and without saying a word pointed to his back.

"I—I didn't know you were sick-like!" exclaimed Tom, gently. "Can't you play any, or jump, or swim?"

Willie shook his head.

"And you have to be cooped up here all day long, and not to do one thing same's other boys do?"

It did seem queer to a boy who never had such a thing as an ache or a pain, and Tom looked perplexed and strangely thoughtful. After a moment's reflection he asked, "Say, did you ever see any sea urchins?" Then, without waiting for a reply, "Lots of fun to watch 'em. I've got some, and I'll divide with you rather do it 'n not!"

Willie reached out his little white hand as he accepted Tom's proposal.

"'Twill be so nice to have something new to do," he thought, "while mamma is busy and Uncle Jack is away at the office."

Before long Tom came in sight, carrying in a pail four of the queer little creatures.

"What a lot of tiny hands they have—all over their bodies!" exclaimed Willie.

Tom placed them near by, where Willie could watch them, and then described some of their strange habits. While he was talking one of the little creatures suddenly turned over on its side, apparently affected by the hot sun.

"Just look there see!" cried Willie, with delight.

Strange as it may seem, the sick urchin's companions were beginning to work their feelers under the little invalid, and it was not long before they were able to support him in an upright position.

"Who would think," exclaimed Willie, "that these little fellows would know enough to be such excellent nurses?"

"He needs a cooler place," said Tom, taking him out of the tub. "There, I guess he'll come around all right now, and he put him in a pail of cool water all by himself."

Willie forgot all about his aching back, so interested he became in watching his little animal friends.

"'Twas so good of Tom," he said, over and over again.

"Halloo!" exclaimed Uncle Jack, as he came in that afternoon from his business in town, "what's my boy got in the tub?"

"Sea urchins," replied Willie, gaily, and then, with a mysterious smile, "but the best one the one that brought me these—has gone home."