

"And shall he heat it in yere?" asked Peachy.

"Yes; why not? He'll like the cosy bit o' fire."

Peachy opened her eyes very wide and gazed hard at her sister.

"I'm werry glad," she said slowly. "I'm h'on'y a little bit surpris'd. I thought as you would never let Robin h'in no more, fur it wouldn't be wot you're allers a-saying 'bout keeping h'ourselves."

"But I'm thinking, Peachy," answered Dulcie in a low, humble voice, "as I'm maybe a little bit wrong 'bout that. It comes to me last night when I c'dn't go to sleep nohow, as mother, wot w.'s so tender and loving, could never, never ha' meant when she said them words so often, as it woz from the poor orphans as we woz to keep h'ourselves. I'm quite sure wot mother alive now as she'd be werry werry good to Robin, and I don't mean as we shan't do all as we can for Robin while we can."

"Well, I'm real glad," answered Peachy, "and I think I hear his step now, so jest put the herring to roast, Dulcie, and when 'tis h'all ready I'll call him h'in. Poor Robin, I guess he'll be real glad."

Dulcie got up at once to toast the herring, and Peachy listened with much satisfaction to the footsteps moving about in Robin's room. They were, it is true, not quite so light and springy as his usually were, but of course they could belong to no one else, and Peachy pleased herself by picturing his astonishment on finding his bed neatly made, and still further delight when he was summoned to partake of a delicious savory supper in their comfortable room.

"The herring's done to a turn. You may call him now, Peachy," said Dulcie from her position by the fire.

Peachy ran to the door, and was about to dash in her headlong style, into Robin's room, when she suddenly stopped short, uttered a little groan of disappointment and displeasure. For just stumbling down the stairs, under her very nose, was not Robin at all, but the decrepit and tottering form of old Harper himself. He heard her exclamation of disappointment, and chuckled inwardly.

Old Harper too had come up-stairs to find Robin, and he, too, like Peachy, was disappointed by his non-appearance, for he was not seeking the boy without a motive. But though Robin was not in the attic, though there was no trace of Robin in the empty and comfortable room, old Harper had not taken his difficult tramp up-stairs for nothing. He had come provided with a light, and saw in consequence what Peachy in the dark could not discover. He saw the freshly removed plaster, and the little, little hole in the wall. The discovery delighted him, for now he could find out something which long had puzzled him.

Old Harper had become intensely, unwholesomely curious about those three little lodgers of his up in that top attic. They were orphans. They followed what he had always considered a very poor trade indeed, and yet he had taken means to discover that they lived with comfort, which children of their class and circumstances seldom enjoyed. They always were respectably clothed, and they appeared to feed well. What a very delicious, what a sumptuous dinner they had partaken of on Sunday! Harper came to the conclusion that the children must be possessed of some secret hoard of money. The more he thought of it the more certain he was that it must be so; and the bare idea that there might be a secret sum of money hid away beneath his very roof—a sum of money which did not belong to him—made his old miserly heart ache and tremble with indescribable longing. He had never felt so proud of Robin in all his life as he did to-day. He had struck on an expedient for finding out all about these mysterious little sisters which even he, with all his vaunted smartness, would not have hit on. "Bravo, Robin!" he said half aloud, "yer a chip o' the old block arter h'all."

Harper determined to avail himself at once of this delightful discovery. He stripped off his shoes and stockings, and stole softly, softly back to Robin's attic. Poor Dulcie and Peachy might listen ever so hard, but not even a creaking board would warn them that their dreaded enemy, old Harper, had come back to spy upon their doings. He extinguished his light, and lay down on the bed which Peachy had prepared so comfortably for Robin. He put his eye to the hole which the boy had made the night be-

fore, and he saw what indeed gave him pangs of extraordinary rapture and pain. He saw the canvas bag, and the money laid on the floor, and the two elder sisters sitting by and eagerly counting and arranging. He did not hear them mention the sum total, and he imagined there was a much larger amount than there really was. But he saw the hiding place for all this treasure under the carefully loosened board, and he could scarcely keep himself from laughing aloud. Then applying his ear to Robin's hole, he heard the little plan for going away on Friday. He listened to Peachy's eager voice and to Dulcie's sweet, grave tones, and the secret of their lives, the grand hope for their future, was laid bare before him. He felt no pity for the brave children, no respect for their honest, upright lives. Having heard all he wanted to hear, he rose from Robin's bed and stole down-stairs as noiselessly as he had come up. Truly it seemed as if Satan had entered into him.

CHAPTER XLV.—THE LAMB IN DANGER.

The next morning for the first time in all her little life, Angel woke without her usual smile and merry laugh. The little child's face was flushed, her eyes heavy, her hands very hot. When Dulcie tried to make her sit up, and endeavored to rouse her, she pressed her little golden head on the pillow, and said that Angel woz werry, werry tired. Neither of the elder children knew much about illness. They decided that Angel must have taken cold, that she had been over-excited, and when she again begged them not to take her up, Dulcie said that as they had a long journey before them to-morrow, they had better let her lie in bed and get well rested.

"I'll jest go round," said Dulcie, "and get a thing or two as we really want werry much, and I think I'll take the fiddle and go to Bloomsbury Square. Maybe as I'll find the children in the winder, though it ain't Saturday; and if they ere there, why, they'll be sure to ax fur you and Angel, then I'll tell 'em as we wot maybe never play fur em no more, and I think as they'll give us a little money."

Peachy approved very much of this plan; and it was arranged that she should stay at home and take care of Angel, and employ herself busily mending and washing all their frocks and other little garments. Angel slept all the morning and Peachy washed and sang at her work and felt very busy and happy. Once she dashed into Robin's room, and seeing the impression of a head on the pillow that she had left so smooth, she concluded that he had come in after all, but had gone away very early in the morning. Well, how very little consequence his alarming words were after all; for had not another day come and nothing whatever happened to any of them? Not even what they really had expected, a notice from old Harper to say that the rent was to be raised.

In the afternoon Angel awoke and was much better, and Peachy took her in her arms and brought her close to the fire to warm her.

"Peachy," said the little child, looking up and speaking solemnly, "wot's a little lamb?"

"I couldn't tell you that exact, my pet," answered Peachy; for she had seen lambs hanging up dead in the butchers' shops, and having no idea that they ever presented any different appearance, she did not believe Angel would enjoy this description.

"I can't tell you," she said; "don't let's think on it."

Angel's eyes opened wide with a little alarm. "Dulcie called me her little, little lamb, the other night," she said. "Dulcie thought I woz asleep; but I wozn't. Dulcie kyed when she called me her little lamb. Is it a bad thing to be a little lamb, Peachy?"

"No, no, darling—'tis nothink the least bit bad." But nevertheless Peachy thought it a queer thing for Dulcie to say, and she was more resolved than ever to tell Angel nothing about the poor dead lambs in the butchers' shops. "Look yere, Angel," she said, "I ha' thought o' somethink; there's an old book o' colored pictures in mother's h'old book. I'll jest root 'em out and we can look at 'em."

Angel was charmed with this suggestion, for pictures were the great delight of her little life, and Dulcie and Peachy had often almost to drag her away from the print-shop. Mother's trunk was speedily ransacked, the book found, and the two children sat down to enjoy it together. The pictures were of a decidedly gaudy and coarse description, and Angel, with her tastes partly

educated by her intent study of the print-shop windows, turned away from them with disdain. But one—a representation of the Good Shepherd bearing a lost lamb back to the fold—attracted her attention. She gazed at it long and eagerly, and laid her little hand on the page to keep it from being turned.

"Wot is the name of dat little animal in the man's arms?" she asked of her sister.

"Maybe 'tis a lamb," answered Peachy, making a random shot, and having no idea that she had spoken the truth.

Angel made the thought her own with avidity.

"'Tis a lamb," she repeated; "a little, little lamb, like Dulcie called me. Don't the man look kind, Peachy? He don't ky'e! and the lamb has its head on his shoulder, like this."

She laid her own little fluffy head as she spoke against Peachy's breast.

"I guess as that lamb's as safe as h'any-think," replied Peachy. "I guess as that man 'ud sooner die nor let the lamb get hurt."

"And would Dulcie sooner die nor let me get hurt?" asked Angel.

"Why, my pet, I think as we both would. But no one ain't go'n to hurt h'our little Angel."

"But you ain't werry strong, Peachy; and Dulcie, when she carries me now and then when I'm werry, werry tired, she trembles, oh, ever so. You couldn't keep your little lamb as safe as that good, kind man has his little lamb, could you Peachy?"

"Maybe he couldn't," owned Peachy, who felt inclined to cry at the very solemn and anxious way Angel regarded her.

"Then I wish I knew that good, kind man."

After a time Angel dropped asleep again, and Peachy laid her back on the bed. She placed the open book, with the picture of the Shepherd and the Lamb, close to her to see, if by any chance she awoke; and then it occurred to Peachy that, as Angel was almost sure to sleep for at least an hour, she might run away, without ever being missed, to say good bye to a girl who lived at the opposite side of the court, and with whom she had struck up a very violent, though secret, friendship.

No sooner did the thought occur to the impulsive child than she resolved to act on it. Angel was sleeping soundly. There was not a stir in the house, for nearly all the lodgers were away. Dulcie could not be tracked for another couple of hours. She locked the door carefully behind her, slipped the key into her dress pocket, and tripped down-stairs three steps at a time. She did not know as she ran down the passage, and out into the street that two men had seen her exit with eager delight. One of these men was Skeggs, who was just entering the court and who saw the little girl without her seeing him. The other was old Harper, who watched her from his window. Skeggs had come over early that morning to Harper, anxious to know how soon he might hope to get possession of little Angel. Harper had told him that nothing could be done while Peachy remained with the child. Now Skeggs quickened his steps joyfully, for, to use Angel's own metaphor, the poor little lamb was utterly unprotected.

But, wonderful to relate, just then Harper, a very wolf himself, proved the little lamb's unexpected deliverer. He had reasons which made him unwilling to give up Angel to Skeggs just then. Eventually she should be his, but not to-day. Skeggs must be made to pay more than five pounds for such a priceless resource as little Angel, and old Harper hop'd to raise the price by delay. Of course the children must not be allowed to undertake their journey to France; but old Harper knew means which would effectually prevent that.

He saw Peachy leave the house; he saw Skeggs approaching; he had not a moment to lose. Snatching up a piece of paper, he wrote on it hastily, "Wait fur me here. 'Tis allright. I'll be back in a minute."

This paper he deposited on the table where Skeggs must see it the moment he entered the room. Then, as fast as ever his tottering old feet and legs could carry him, he mounted the stairs to the children's attic, panting, his breath coming in gasps. He at last reached the door. It was locked. But Harper was not unprepared for such an emergency. He pulled a bunch of old, rusty keys out of his pocket. One after the other he tried in the lock. The last one turned it. He entered the room.

Little Angel lay sound asleep, her golden hair tossed out over the pillow. It would have been very easy for him to carry the little child off now. But no; more money might be made out of her. She might sleep on; he was seeking another prize to-day. He crept softly behind the bed, raised the loosened board, found the little bag, slipped it softly into his bosom, left the room in the same cat-like manner in which he entered it, relocked the door, and went down-stairs.

(To be Continued.)

THE SUNDAY MORNING BUGBEAR.

We hear a great deal, as indeed we ought, about the duty of making Sunday pleasant to children, and every parent realizes, with a pang of remorse, how very hard that is to do. But there is another duty which is much easier, and which would go far toward accomplishing the same result; that is, to avoid making it unpleasant.

I do not believe the grown folks understand what I mean, but some of the children will, especially the girls. The trouble is this is the Sunday clothes. As long as the day is of necessity the dress-parade day with ordinary people who work, the time of getting ready for morning Sunday-school is apt to be a very hard one for children. The hurried mother does not realize it at all, and feels that she alone is to be pitied in the harassing turmoil. She does not even know that the whole week's scolding, for that fruitful cause of scolding, "spoiling their clothes," often falls on the devoted heads within this half-hour. All the rents and grass-stains now come to light; all the forgotten mendings and lost handkerchiefs. No wonder the poor mother is angry, and no wonder the children dread Sunday.

I once saw some little girls, when I was a child, make, as they thought, an exhaustive study on Saturday of their entire outfit, hoping to escape the alarming discoveries of the weekly crisis, but in vain. For we all know that before the age when dress becomes an idol, it is a very occult science, impossible for the average child to grasp in its details.

I do not know what remedy to propose. It is the fashion of some reformers to decry evils without providing a cure. To defer the scolding would be worse than to defer for the conscious delinquent; to condone all offences found out on Sunday might be irrational.

But, perhaps, for this particular style of offence, which presses so heavily on purse and energy, the fault-findings are likely, at any rate, to be unduly severe, and a special curb on the sharp tongue at a trying moment in the week might be conducive to justice as well as to Sunday happiness.—*Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

BOYS AND GIRLS' TEMPERANCE TEXT-BOOK.

BY H. L. READE.

(National Temperance Society, New York.)

LESSON V.—ALCOHOL—CONTINUED.

How is alcohol obtained?

Alcohol is a product of fermentation, and is obtained in usable quantities from fruits and vegetables and grains while they are in the process of decay.

Is alcohol a necessity in a healthy condition of animal life?

It is not a necessity.

Does alcohol add permanently to the body's power of endurance?

It does not.

Do persons who seek to possess their highest possible physical force, use alcohol to this end?

They do not. On the contrary, they do not use it at all.

Can persons do more work with the mind by using alcohol?

In the long run, they cannot do as much. It is even the moderate use of alcohol good to the healthy human system?

It is not.

What is the proper use of alcohol?

Alcohol is a preservative and solvent, and is necessary in the preparation of medicines and in the mechanical arts.

What effect does it have when taken into a healthy animal body?

Taken in small quantities, into a healthy animal body, it is a disturbing and evil agent. Taken in large quantities, it is a deadly poison.