

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## A Fight With Fate.

(W. Bert Foster, in the 'Christian Endeavor World'.)

Several years ago a certain town on the New England coast was aroused from its somnolence by exciting news. The railway which passed through the place was to lay a double-track system, had bought a large piece of land (mostly mud-flats) along the bay shore, and announced its intention of erecting repair-shops and car-building sheds on its new property.

The sleepy town awoke to the importance of this news at once. In years past the place had been of no little importance as a sea-port, but as American shipping declined Rivermouth had gradually become fossilized. The decision of the railway company to establish its shops there meant a new lease of life to the town.

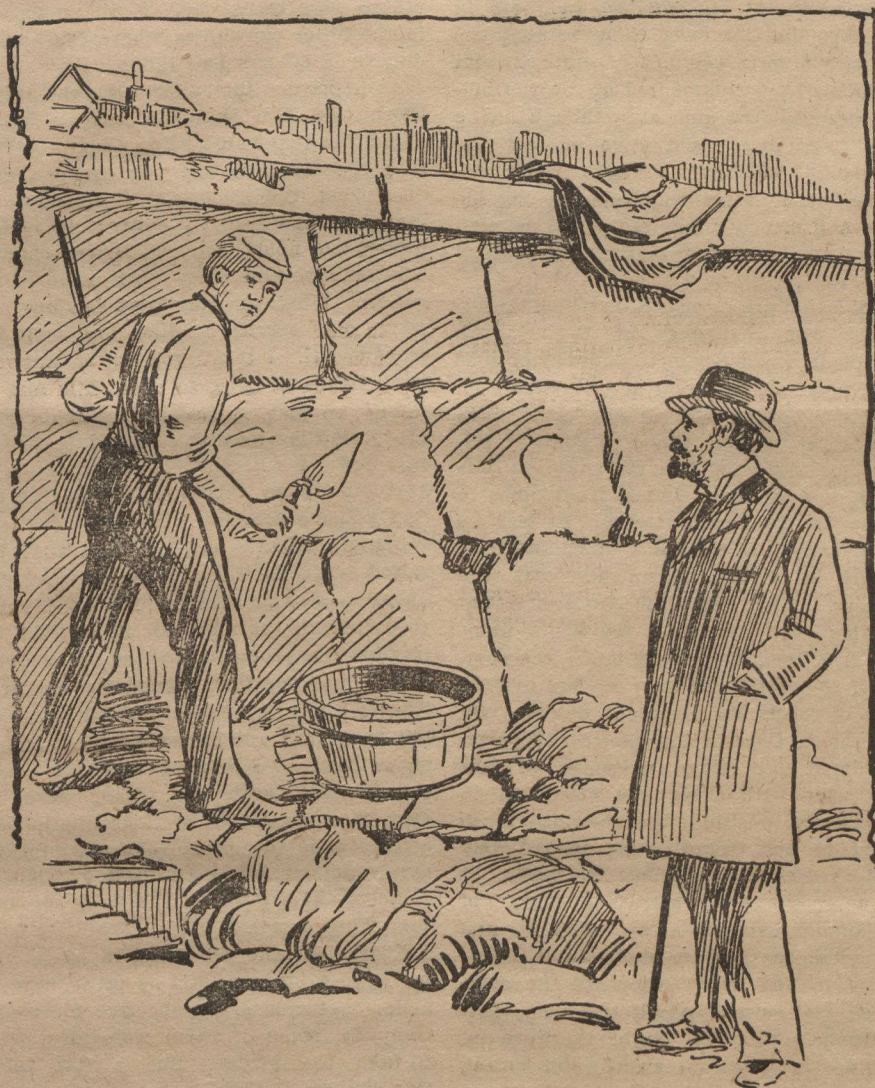
The company gave out the contract for the filling in of the mud-flats and the building of a sea-wall at once, and the contractor whose bid was accepted engaged many of

having that section of the town effaced as they were to see the unsightly flats themselves filled in.

The contract called for the completion of the filling and the sea-wall within a twelve-month, and the number of men engaged in the work was large. Yet, if they did not work together and work well, the contractor could scarcely keep his agreement with the railway company.

The workmen were divided into gangs, over each of which was an overseer; but the contractor soon saw that there must be somebody to 'oversee' the overseers, or slackness and inattention would result. At first it was his practice to go about among the different gangs himself; but he soon found that it needed the entire time of one responsible man to do that, and he looked about him for such a person.

One day, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, he went out where the sea-wall was being built, and on reaching the spot found a solitary individual busy on the face of the wall. It was a young fellow still in his teens, with



I DON'T DRINK.

his workmen on the spot, instead of importing foreign laborers. This made the man as well as the improvement doubly popular. One reason why Rivermouth people were glad to see the work go on was that in time it would clean out one of the bad quarters of the town. The tenements bordering on the flats were old and disreputable, and scattered among them were several notorious dram-shops. In one of these—Cafferty's—a man had been killed only the year before; and his murderer, once a man respected in the town and of good family, had been sentenced to a long term in the State penitentiary. So the good people of Rivermouth were as glad to see the possibility of

an intelligent, though very, grave face. He had a bucket of cement and a trowel, and was engaged in 'pointing' the wall; that is, neatly filling in the seams and interstices with stone and cement. It was nice work and required a competent workman.

'Where are the rest of the men?' asked the contractor.

'It's eleven o'clock, sir; and they've all gone over to old Cafferty's after their beer.' 'Don't you ever go with them?'

The young man's face flushed deeply, and he turned hastily away. The contractor repeated the question.

'Never, sir!' responded the other, in a low, strained voice.

'Why not?'

'I don't drink,' shortly.

'Is that your only reason?'

'No, it's not!' exclaimed the young man, turning fiercely. 'See there!' He pointed to a dingy brick building, surrounded by a high wall, which stood by itself on a hill half a mile away. 'That's the pest-house. I'd rather go in there, with a small-pox patient in every room, than into Cafferty's.'

'Why?' queried the inquisitive gentleman.

The young fellow looked at him strangely for a moment. 'My name is Allan Blake,' he said.

'Allan Blake—Allan Blake?' repeated the contractor, puzzled. 'What of it?'

'It was my father who killed Jim Brennan, the gambler, in Cafferty's place a year ago,' said the young fellow hoarsely.

'O—ah—I am a stranger here,' said the gentleman in some confusion, and was about to turn away. But something impelled him to go back and ask, 'Isn't there any other reason why you don't go off for your beer with the others, my lad?'

'How do you mean, sir? Isn't that reason enough?'

'I mean, do you keep to work from principle while the others take a recess in their employer's time?'

Young Blake looked, for a few moments, a little puzzled. He did not at first catch the contractor's meaning. But gradually his face cleared.

'Ah, I see. You mean to ask me if I do this because I think it is right?'

The gentleman nodded, whereupon the other went on: 'Why, no, sir; I can't say it's exactly that. I'd do right anyhow, simply because it is right; but I keep to work because I want, one of these days, to be somebody, to succeed in business, to do something better than working on a level with a gang of navvies. I've my poor father's record against me. It's a hard row to hoe, I've found. I've lost two positions this year just because I was my father's son. But I'm bound to fight fate till I win!' and Blake brought his clenched fist down into his hand with emphasis.

'Yes, yes,' nodded the contractor, smiling. 'I think we now understand one another. Do you know who I am?'

'No, sir.'

'Well, I think I once hired the man who hired you. However, you know where the contractor's office—the paymaster's office, is, don't you?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then, my lad, do you call there this evening half an hour after you quit work here.'

At the appointed time Allan Blake presented himself at the contractor's office. That was the last day as a 'navvy' on the sea-wall. In less than a year he not only was the contractor's right-hand man, but he owned stock in the enterprise, and in ten years, although still a young man, was one of the leading citizens of New England's metropolis.

## The Sergeant's Story

(Alliance News.)

The following story was told by Sergeant Dando at a meeting of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society, in the village of Longton, in Westshire.

The Sergeant had lived in the village for many years; in fact, ever since he retired from the service with a number of medals and clasps and a well-earned pension. For a long time he had increased his income by