

THOSE BAD BOYS.

THERE are two classes of boys for whose evil tendencies there are at present no adequate remedies. These are truants, or those who, against the will of their parents, absent themselves from school after enrollment, and those who, with or without parental consent, are growing up in idleness and vice. The former class is most likely to engage the attention of the teacher; the latter, of the philanthropist. The difference between them is simply one of degree, usually merely a question of time. Truancy is so nearly always a first step in the downward career of those who at length constitute our criminal class, that I might almost say, "No truants, no criminals." A truancy may range in demerit from a thoughtless loitering to see a parade, to deliberately leaving home and seeking the worst companionship, defiant of a father's authority, insulting a mother's tears. In point of fact, these cases I have detailed do thus range. A considerable portion of those truant but once are truant once only, because they have not returned to school at all.

Some of these boys were born bad; some in the rude riot of a passionate nature have fallen into evil courses, and those having the elements of the strongest manhood are drawn down to the worst criminality; some are bad from association—they have fallen under the influence of a stronger arm or a stronger will, and are carried along in a current from which they know not how to escape. Vicious men tempt them. A parent told one of our teachers he could keep his boy in school if it were not for the men who enticed him into saloons. Parents instruct many children in the ways of crime, but most bad boys have become such from lack of paren-

tal control. Parents are too busy to attend to their children, too weak to contend with their boisterous strength. Many, especially of foreign birth, are not so sharp as their children, whose wits are rendered acute by the encounters of the streets, and hence are unable to maintain discipline. With the better classes the cause of truancy and incorrigibility is, more often than otherwise, divided counsels in the parental management. The father is good natured and easy-going, and laughs at the anxiety of the mother as to the conduct of the child; or the father is strict and the mother indulgent, and pities the little fellow, shows her sympathy, and thereby convinces the boy that the father is a monster of injustice. The boy is then beyond any influence from the father but the influence of force. The mother shields the son, deceives the father as to his conduct, and henceforth his ruin is merely a question of time enough for such seed to bear fruit. To trace the orbits of these planets from the school-room as a centre of observation is not difficult.

The teacher notices a listless inattention, a vacancy of mind, the result of wandering thought. The boy's body is in the school-room, his mind evidently not. This idle spirit becomes in steady progression, peevish, irritable, ill-tempered, insubordinate, defiant. The next stage in the development of the disease is truancy. With some boys this second stage comes before the temper has soured to the point of insubordination. This is the last stage at which the remedial skill of the teacher can be applied, and unless some effective remedy reaches the case at this point, the boy's moral constitution and life prospects are alike ruined. This is the outward manifestation. The inner