

For Girls and Boys.

BACKBONE.

When you see a fellow mortal
Without fixed and fearless views,
Hanging on the skirts of others,
Walking in their cast-off shoes,
Bowing low to wealth and favor,
With abject uncovered head,
Ready to retract or waver,
Willing to be drove or led;
Walk yourself with firmer bearing;
Throw your moral shoulders back,
Show your spine has nerve and marrow—
Just the things which his must lack.

A stronger word
Was never heard
In sense or tone
Than this, backbone.

When you see a politician
Crawling through contracted holes,
Begging for some fat position,
In the ring or at the polls,
With no sterling manhood in him,
Nothing staple, broad or sound,
Destitute of pluck or ballast,
Double-sided all around;
Walk yourself with firmer bearing,
Throw your moral shoulders back,
Show your spine has nerve and marrow—
Just the thing which his must lack.

A stronger word
Was never heard
In sense or tone,
Than this, backbone.

—The Tidings.

GRANDPA'S SCHOOL.

Although Grandpa Brown was nearly seventy years of age, still he was not too old to teach a queer little school for the benefit of his grandchildren.

At precisely three o'clock every Saturday afternoon, grandpa tinkled his little handbell, and in five minutes there were seated in a row before him five wideawake grandchildren, three girls and two boys.

The pupils brought no books to study, but before taking their seats they deposited slips of paper in grandpa's hat, on which were written certain questions that he was to answer. These questions were upon many subjects the children might select, but they usually had reference to something heard, seen or read of during the week, and the children were always on the alert for a puzzling question. Perhaps a description of the exercise upon one afternoon may prove interesting.

As soon as the children were all seated, grandpa put on his spectacles, took his hat from the table, and opening the first paper he read as follows:—

"Dear Grandpa—The past week we have been learning from an old sailor how to tie the various kinds of knots, such as reef knots, loop knots, figure-eight knots, etc.; now this sailor says he can teach how to tie all kinds of knots but the 'Gordian knot.' Can you tell me what that is and how to tie it?" FRANK.

"Ah," said grandpa, when he had finished reading, "that is a hard question, indeed; I could tell you better how the 'Gordian knot' was severed than how it was made."

"That will do just as well," replied the boy.

"Well," said grandpa, "the Gordian knot was made by a rustic king of Phrygia, named Gordius. The cord was made from the fibrous bark of the cornel-tree, and the knot fastened the ox yoke to the pole of a wagon which King Gordius had used. The knot proved so intricate that no one could untie it, or even find where it began or ended.

"The oracle had declared that he who should untie the knot should be master of Asia. Alexander the Great was resting his

army after the battle in the city of Gordium, about the year 333 before Christ, and he determined to untie this celebrated knot, but not being successful, he became impatient, and striking with his sword he severed the knot with one blow."

"That is a good story, grandpa," replied Frank; "the next time I see the sailor I must tell him all about it."

The second slip was taken from the hat, and the question was this:—

"Grandpa, is it right to throw stones at frogs?—JULIA."

When this question was read, Willie and Frank looked troubled as though guilty of such conduct. Grandpa did not appear to notice this, but remarked that frogs were quite sensitive to pain, and he thought that no pupil of his would be guilty of pelting frogs. Then turning to Frank, he said: "I wish you would bring a frog to school next Saturday, for I want you to see what a peculiar tongue it has."

"Is it forked like a snake's tongue?" inquired Frank.

"No, my son, but you know that the tongue of most animals lies with the tip pointing towards the lips; now, the base or large portion of the frog's tongue is joined to the point of the lower jaw and the tip points down the throat. So, whenever the frog catches an insect, it is quickly thrust back into the throat by the tongue, and its fate is sealed."

The third question was from Emily. It was this:—

"Grandpa, can the people on the moon see the earth?"

"It is not known," replied grandpa, "whether the moon is inhabited; but if so, the earth must present to them all the phases that the moon presents to us, only in a reverse order. For instance, when we have a new moon they have a full moon. Only one side of the moon is turned toward us, therefore the moon's inhabitants upon the other side might have to take long journeys to take a peep at our planet, but it would, doubtless, well repay them, for the earth would look, when full, fourteen times as large as our full moon."

"Wouldn't it be a grand sight! I wish I could see such a large moon as that," said Emily.

Mamie's question was in regard to echoes. She had been in the woods with some of her friends the day before, and when they shouted the sounds were repeated sometimes in one syllable, at other times in two. Her question was this:—

"Can more than two syllables ever be heard as an echo?"

Grandpa replied that "When several parallel surfaces are properly suited the echo may repeat backward and forward many times. For instance, in Virginia there is an echo which is said to return twenty notes played upon a flute, and at Woodstock, England, there is one which repeats seventeen syllables by day and twenty by night. When the exclamation 'ha!' is quickly and sharply spoken, there returns back a 'ha, ha, ha.'"

The last question was from Willie. He was a growing, hungry boy, and could not believe that persons might suffer more from thirst than from hunger. He writes:

"Grandpa, is water more important to life than food? I have eaten five meals since yesterday morning, and I haven't drank a drop of water; now I'm not thirsty one bit, but I feel that I could eat two meals at one time."

"You may not have drank clear water," replied grandpa, "for two days, but do you not take milk with every meal? and haven't you eaten apples, melons, potatoes, and turnips since yesterday morning?"

"Yes, sir," replied Willie.

"Well," said grandpa, "all of these things contain a great amount of water, and that accounts for your not being thirsty. Our bodies are composed mostly of water, and will suffer extremely if not supplied in some manner. Water is so plentiful that we do not realize its worth. Eliza Cook well says:—

'Traverse the desert and then you can tell
What treasures exist in the cold, deep well;
Sink in despair on the red parched earth,
And then you may reckon what water is worth.'

God has made water very abundant because he knows our need of it from day to day. Did you ever notice how often water is spoken of in the Bible? Moses brought it from a rock, Samuel from a jaw-bone; Elijah, by prayer to God, brought water from the clouds."

The tall clock in the hall now struck the hour of four, and, after grandpa had repeated his request in regard to bringing the frog upon the next Saturday, he dismissed his school.—New York Observer.