

Young Folks.

BERNARD PALISSY.

FROM THE FRENCH.

A few facts from the laborious life of this man of genius will serve to show how great is the power of an indomitable will over the most formidable obstacles.

We have only vague and uncertain accounts as to the country and time of birth of this illustrious artisan. But it little matters to us whether he were born at the end of the 15th century or beginning of the 16th, or if the diocese of Agen or some other place claims him as a citizen. We will leave these minutiae to critical biographers, and will content ourselves with gleanings from Bernard Palissy's own writings, some interesting facts which will demonstrate his perseverance in all he undertook.

In his youth, Palissy was engaged in the work of drawing and painting on glass; he was also frequently employed in law-suits, to sketch the plans of the disputed estates. At this early period of his life, he had established himself in the town of Saintes, and lived there in obscurity on the gains of his labor. One day, he accidentally saw a beautiful enamelled earthenware cup, and he became possessed of the desire to make one equally perfect. He naturally thought that, with his talent for painting, he would be able to make earthenware vases of a beautiful kind could he but discover the art of fabricating and mixing enamels. "And from that time," he says, "notwithstanding my total ignorance of the different kinds of potter's clay, I set to work to find enamels, though I was as a man fumbling in the dark." The earthenware cup, which gave the impetus to his genius and emulation, was probably one from the shops of Faenza or Castel Durante, which were then renowned throughout Europe. Wherever it came from, it was the cause of Palissy's

studies and researches. Then began his struggles against innumerable difficulties, against agonizing trials, which would have cowed into indifference a common will.

Palissy had earned some money by sketching the islands and neighboring features of the salt marshes of Saintonge; his knowledge of practical geometry had caused him to be chosen for this work, by the commissioners appointed to levy the tax on salt in this province. This money was spent in his search for enamels. Palissy's noble ambition was not, however, altogether praiseworthy. Had he been single, one could but have admired his self-devotion and courage in all his privations; but he had a family, and to give himself up exclusively to his new pursuit, he culpably abandoned the trade which gave bread to his little ones. From thenceforth, Bernard Palissy employed every moment in kneading clay, and covering it with a carefully prepared substance. Then, filled with intense anxiety as to the result, he superintended incessantly the baking of his enamels; but his first attempts were fruitless, and poverty soon reigned in the house. This misfortune was not sufficient to damp his artistic zeal. His infatuation prevented him from feeling, or from hearing, the complaints which were showered upon him. If he succeeded in making some improvements in his processes, he fancied he had nearly attained the object of his desires, and this hope armed him with resignation. If he suffered to-day, if his family wanted bread to-morrow, perhaps he will arrive at the summit of his wishes, and incalculable riches will be his reward. Such were Palissy's constant illusions for more than twenty years. "Every day," says a biographer, "Palissy's abode