

MARTIN LUTHER'S PRAYER.

OUR God, our Father! with us stay,
And make us keep Thy narrow way;
Free us from sin, and all its power;
Give us a joyful dying hour;
Protect us from Satan's arts,
And let us hold our hopes on Thee;
Down in our very heart of hearts,
O God, may we true servants be;
And serve Thee ever perfectly!
Help us, with all Thy children here,
To fight and flee with holy fear;
Free from temptation, and to fight
With Thine own weapons for the right.
Amen! amen! so let it be,
So shall we ever sing to Thee,
Hallelujah!

BACKBONE AND GRIT.



THE stage has gone, sir, but there's a widow lives here, and she's got a boy, and he'll drive you over. He's a nice little fellow, and Deacon Ball lets him have his team for a trifle, and we like to get him a job when we can."

It was a hot day in July. Away up among the hills that make the lower slope of the Monadnock Mountain a friend lay very ill. In order to reach his temporary home one must take an early train to the nearest station, and trust to the lumbering old coach that made a daily trip to K—. The train was late; the stage, after waiting some time, was gone. The landlord of the little white hotel appeared in his shirt sleeves, and leaning his elbows on the balcony rail, dropped down on the hot and thirsty traveller what comfort could be extracted from the opening sentence of my sketch.

"Would we not come in and have some dinner?" "Yes." "Would he send for the deacon's team?" "Yes." "And the boy?" "Yes."

And the dinner was eaten and the team came round—an open buggy and an old white horse, and just as we were seated the door of the little brown house across the way opened and out rushed the "widow's boy."

In his mouth was the last morsel of his dinner, he had evidently learned how to "eat and run." His feet were clad in last winter's much-worn boots, whose wrinkled legs refused to stay within the limits of his narrow and faded trousers. As his legs flew forward his arms flew backward in an ineffectual struggle to get himself inside a jacket much too short in the sleeves.

"There he is," said the hostler, "that's the Widow Beebe's boy. I told him I'd hold the horse while he went home to get a bite."

The horse did not look as if he needed to be held, but the hostler got his d.me, and the boy approached him in time to relieve my mind as to whether he would conquer the jacket or the jacket would conquer him and turn him wrong side out.

He was sun-burned and freckled, large-mouthed and red-haired—a homely, plain wretched little Yankee boy; and yet, as we rode through the deep summer bloom and fragrance of the shaded road, winding up the long hills in the glow of the afternoon sun, I learned such a lesson from the little fellow as I shall not soon forget.

He did not look much like a preacher

as he sat stooping forward a little, whisking the flies from the deacon's horse, but his sermon was one which I wish might have been heard by all the boys in the land. As it was I had to spur him on now and then by questions to get him to tell all about himself.

"My father died, you see, and left my mother the little brown house opposite the barn. You saw it, didn't you, sir—the one with the lilac bushes under the window? Father was sick a long time, and when he could not work he had to raise money on the house. Deacon Ball let him have it, a little at a time, and when father was gone mother found the money owed was almost three hundred dollars. At first she thought she would have to give up the house, but the Deacon said, 'Let it wait awhile,' and he turned and patted me on the head, and, 'when Johnny gets big enough to earn something I shall expect him to pay it.' I was only nine then, and I am thirteen now; I remember it, and I remember, mother cried, and said, 'Yes, Deacon, Johnny is my only hope now,' and I wondered and wondered what work I could do. I really felt as I ought to begin at once, but I couldn't think of anything to do."

"Well, what did you do?" I asked quickly, for I was afraid he would stop, and I wanted to hear the rest.

"Well, at first, I did very funny things for a boy. Mother used to knit socks to sell, and she sewed the rags to make rag-carpets and I helped."

"How? What could you do?" "Well, the people who would like a carpet could not always get the time to make it. So I went to the houses among the farmers and took home their rags, old coats, and everything they had, and out in the woodshed I ripped and cut them up. Then mother sewed them, and sometimes I sewed some, too, and then I rolled them into balls and took them back to the owners, all ready to be woven into rugs."

"But did they pay for your work?" "Oh, yes, we got so much per pound, and I felt quite like a young merchant when I weighed them out with our own steelyards. But that was only one way; we've two or three old apple trees out in the back yard by the wall, and we dried the apples and sold them. Then some of the farmers who had a good many apples began to send them to us to dry, and we paid them so many pounds all dry, and had the rest to sell."

"But you surely could not do much in ways like these?"

"No, not much, but something; and we had the knitting."

"Did you knit?"

"Not at first, but after a while mother began to have the rheumatism in her hands, and the joints became swollen and the fingers twisted, and it hurt her to move them. Then I learned to knit; before that I wound the yarn for her. I had to learn to sew a little, too, for mother didn't like to see the holes without patches."

And he looked half smilingly at the specimens on his knees.

"But you did not mend those?" said I.

"Yes, sir; but I was in a hurry, and mother said it was not done as it ought to be. They had just been washed, and I couldn't wait for them to dry."

"Who washed them?"

"I did, and ironed them, too. I can wash and iron almost as well as mother can. She don't mean to let me, but how is she going to help it? She can hardly use her hands at all, and some days she cannot leave her chair, so I had to learn to make the beds and to scrub the floor and wash the dishes, and I can cook almost as well as a girl."

"Is it possible? I shall have to take supper with you on my way back to the city and test your skill."

Johnny blushed, and I added:

"It's a pity, my boy, that you haven't a sister."

"I had on," he said, gently, "but she died, and—if she had lived, I shouldn't have wished her to lift and bring wood and water, and scrub as poor mother always did. Sometimes I wish I could have sprung all the way from a baby to a man. It's such slow work growing up, and it was while mother was waiting for us to grow up that she worked so hard."

"But, my boy, you cannot expect to be son and daughter and mother all in one. You cannot do the work for a whole family."

"Yes, I can; it isn't much, and I'm going to do it and the work my father left undone. I'm going to pay that mortgage, if I live."

"Heaven grant you may," I said, fervently, under my breath, "for not many mothers have such a son."

"Mother don't know I mean to do it, and she is very anxious I should go to school, and I mean to, some time; but I know just where the boys in my class are studying, and I get the lessons at home. Mother reads them to me out of the book, when I am washing the dishes or doing her work, and we have great fun. I try to remember and repeat it, and if we come to anything we can't make out, I take it over to the teacher in the evening; she is very kind, she tells me."

Very kind! Who wouldn't be kind to such a boy? I felt the tears coming to my eyes at such a vision of this son doing girl's work, while the poor old mother held the book in her twisted hands and tried to help him to learn.

"But all this does not earn money, my boy. How do you expect to save if you spend your time indoors?"

"Oh, I don't do girl's work all day, no indeed! I have worked out our taxes on the road. It wasn't much, but I helped the men build a stone wall down by the river; and Deacon Ball lets me do a great deal of work for him, and when I get a chance to take anybody from the hotel to ride, he lets me have his team for almost nothing, and I pay to him whatever I make. And I work on the farm with the men in summer; and I have a cow of my own and sell the milk at the tavern; and we have some hens, too, and sell the eggs. And in the fall I cut and pile the winter's wood in the sheds for the people who haven't any boys—and there's a good many people about here who haven't any boys," he added, brushing a fly from the old horse with the tip of his whip.

After this we fell into silence and rode through the sweet New England roads, with Monadnock rising before us ever nearer and more majestic. It impressed me with a sense of his rugged strength—one of the hills, "rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun," but I glanced from the mountain to the little red-headed morsel of humanity at my side, with a sort of recognition

of their kinship. Somehow they seemed to belong together. I felt as if the same sturdy stuff were in them both. It was only a fancy, but it was confirmed the next day, for when I came back to town after seeing my invalid friend, I called on Deacon Ball. I found him white-haired and kindly-faced. He kept the village store and owned a pretty house, and was evidently very well to do. Naturally we talked of John, and the deacon said to me with tears in his old watery blue eyes:

"Why, bless your heart, sir, you don't think I'm going to take his money, do you? The only son of his mother, and she a widow, and all tied up into double bow knots with rheumatics, besides! True enough, I let his father have the money, and my wife she says, says she to me, 'Well deacon, my dear, we've not got a child, and shall be just as well off a hundred years from now if the widow never pays a cent, but according to my calculations it's better to let the boy think he's payin'. She says I might as well try to keep a barrel of vinegar from workin' as to keep that boy from workin'. It's the mother in him and its got to work. We think a good deal of the widow, Mandy and me. I did before I ever saw Mandy, but for all that we hold the mortgage, and Johnny wants to work it out. Mandy and me, we are going to let him work."

I turned away, for I was going to sup at Johnny's house, but before I went I asked the deacon how much Johnny had already paid.

"Well, I don't know, Mandy knows—I pass it to her, she keeps the book. Drop in before you go to the train and I'll show it to you."

I dropped in and the deacon showed me the account. It was the book of a savings bank in a neighbouring town, and on its pages were credits of all the little sums the boy had earned or paid, and I saw they were standing in widow Beebe's name. I grasped the deacon's hand. He was looking away over the house-tops to where Monadnock was smiling under the good-night kiss of the sun.

"Good-bye, sir, good-bye," he said, returning my squeeze with interest. "Much obliged, I am sure, Mandy and me too; but don't you be worried about Johnny. When we see it we know the real stuff it takes to make a real man, and Johnny has got it, Johnny is like that mountain over there—choke full of grit and lots of backbone."

HOW TO LENGTHEN LIFE.

MEDEA was a famous witch in the old witch in the old days of lie and fable. It is said that she lengthened out the life of an old man by a mixture in her boiler, putting in herbs, roots, seeds, and various kinds of nonsensical things, including part of a wolf, a stag, and a crow that had seen seven generations! To have a long life we don't need any pretended help from a witch. If we take care of the body, cultivate habits of temperance, honesty, industry, and obey God, that will bring "length of days."

"Money is round, and made to roll," said the spendthrift to the miser. "That's your way of looking at it," said the latter, "I say that money is flat and made to pile up."