

Sunday-School Advocate.

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WHAT IS YOUR WISH, MY CHILD?

THE old fairy-books tell many pleasant stories about fairies who sometimes gave their favorites whatever they wished. If wishing would bring us what we desire it would be quite an easy way of getting along, though I doubt whether we should find *wishing* ourselves into good fortune as profitable in the end as *working* our way into it. But let us suppose, my son, that you could have your wish granted by some powerful fairy, or genii, or elf, what would you wish for?

"I would wish for lots of money," cries Carl, the selfish. "I would wish for eloquence," cries Harry, the ambitious. "I would wish for great power. I would like to be a great soldier and command men," cries Ulric, the proud. "I would like to be a great merchant," cries Peter, the calculator. Other voices utter other cries, but these are as many as I can print, and quite enough for my purpose.

Listen, Carl, Harry, Ulric, and Peter! I know five fairies who will grant your wishes if you choose to make them your friends. Their names are WILL, WORK, SKILL, PATIENCE, and PERSEVERANCE. You understand me, don't you? I mean that if Carl *wills*, that is, makes up his mind that he will be a rich man, if he works hard, if he applies all the skill which God has hidden in his brain, if he will begin slowly to earn and lay up penny after penny, dollar after dollar, and if he keep on willing and working, then he will become a rich man. I suppose there is hardly a boy in my Advocate family who might not become a rich man by these means.

In like manner Harry may become eloquent, Ulric powerful, and Peter a great merchant, for Will, Work, Skill, Patience, and Perseverance will enable almost any boy to become almost what he chooses. But suppose you get to be a rich man, Carl, and you, Harry, an eloquent speaker, and you a mighty soldier, Ulric, and you a rich merchant, Peter, what then? Would you have won such prizes in the game of life as would make you happy *for ever*?

Yes, *for ever*! Mark those words! FOR EVER! *What have they to do with the question?* Just this. You are to live for ever. God has sent you into this world as to a school, in which you are to prepare yourselves to live in the great hereafter. The next world, and not this, is to be your home. After a little while, it may be one year or it may be fifty years, you will leave the earth and go home just as children at a boarding-school go home when the course of study taught there is finished. Now, suppose you gather riches, become eloquent, gain power, or become the owner of ships and merchandise, what good will those things do you in the great world?

You can't carry them with you to that world? Very true, my children. Riches, eloquence, power, merchandise, must all be left this side of the gateway which leads into your everlasting home. Don't you see, then, that if you gain nothing but these in this life you will be very poor when you enter that other world. You will have nothing to carry home with you.

Is there anything we can carry to our home hereafter? Certainly there is, my children. You can and you must carry your *characters* with you. If you are selfish, proud, covetous, passionate, or revengeful, you will carry those bad qualities with you. If you are loving, truthful, gentle, kind, meek, forgiving, and unselfish, you will carry those good qualities with you. Your characters then, whether good or evil, are the only things you can carry with you into the great hereafter.

To carry a bad character into the world beyond is to carry sorrow and death there. To take a character there made pure and white in the blood of Jesus is to take what God loves, and what will make him regard you as his child, friend, and companion for ever.

Now I know that you see *good character* to be better worth living for than money, eloquence, or power, because it is a possession you can keep for ever. Will you not, therefore, choose such a character as your portion and seek it with all your hearts?

OUR CONVERSATION CORNER.

WELL, Mr. Corporal, I learn that you have been from home of late. What did you see while traveling?

"Traveling, indeed—!" the Corporal exclaims with a laugh. "I did not travel far—only to Philadelphia. I will tell you one or two things I saw there, however. One evening I went to the Asylum for the Blind. The inmates gave us a concert. It was capital. The blind boys and lads played music on their instruments of the very highest order, and played it very finely too. The boys and girls, with the young people, sang sweet songs, and blind old Mr. Parvin sang some humorous pieces in a way that made me laugh until I cried. I was delighted with the concert, though I felt sad all the time as I thought that those dear children could not see us, or each other, or any of the beautiful things which God has made. It must be a sad thing to be blind. Let my children thank God they are not blind."

Did the children seem cheerful, Corporal?

"Yes, Mr. Editor, more than cheerful. They looked happy. I asked a group of them if they were happy.



They said, 'Yes.' I asked them if they had ever heard of your paper. One of them said she had. I told them of our half million readers and asked if they had any message for them. 'Tell them to come and see us,' said one little girl. Others added, 'Yes, tell them to come and see us.'

There, my children, is an invitation worth accepting. Don't forget it. If you ever go to Philadelphia be sure to visit the Institution for the Blind—you are invited guests. What else did you see, my Corporal?

"I visited the State Reform School, where I saw and talked to some six hundred boys and girls. I pitied them, because many of them have done wicked things. Many, perhaps most of them, came from homes of sin. They are there to be reformed and taught trades. The boys make chairs, brushes, boots and shoes, match-boxes, etc. They eat in two large rooms—boys in one, girls in the other. They sleep in little cells, each by himself or herself. These cells are in blocks. Those for the girls at one end of the building, those for the boys at the other. They open into long halls or corridors. The door of each cell has a hole in it near the top, so that the watch can look in at all hours. This school is a great blessing to many, perhaps to most of the poor children who enter it. It is a pity they need its influence at all, but it is a good thing they can go there to be taught right and duty. I hope none of my company will ever be so wicked as to be sent to that or any similar house of reform."

I hope not, my Corporal. Sin is a cruel master. He makes all his followers pay very dear for the few pleasures he allows them. Now for your letter-bag, Corporal.

"Let me first give my Try Company a Scripture enigma which I found in an English magazine. You may see one of the characters in the above picture. Solve it if you can.

"Who took his death-blow from a woman's hand?
What was the name of good Cornelius' band?"

Who came to Jesus in the quiet night?
Whom did young David venture forth to fight?
Over whose body did the Red Sea flow?
Where did St. Paul the pains of bondage know?
Who tasted first sin's fruits of death and grief?
Whose words of comfort gave a king relief?
A wise man who from wisdom turned aside?
Who traveled far to fetch his master's bride?
Who 'mid a battle by his own hand died?
She o'er whose corpse the needy widows grieved?
A child who cheered a woman sore bereaved?
Where knelt our Saviour in his darkest hour?
One of the kings who fell beneath God's power?
He who was cast to lions to be torn,
And waited safely for the coming morn'?

Let the initials of these names convey
A pleasant duty to be done each day:
Let every rising sun of it remind;
Our daily blessings, and our kinsfolk kind;
But most the thoughts of that dear Saviour's love
Who died that we might reign with him above.

"Here is a line from BOWEN STALEY, of Albany, in the state of New York. He says:

"I wish to belong to your company because I love to try to do everything as well as I can. I have at home some prizes for trying to do well. One is a silver cup, for getting the largest collection to build our new mission. Another is a gold pencil for getting the most scholars in our school. I have others for punctual attendance and so on. So, you see, I have a little claim to the honor. I send you photographs of our mission, and myself and little brother, who is a member of our infant class."

Bravo! Master Bowen Staley. You have begun the race of life nobly. I like your face. It looks as if you would grow up an earnest boy. God bless you! Your little brother's face is cute and pleasant. The Corporal expects you both to be greatly good.

"Here is a line from Davenport, Iowa. The writer says:

"We have a glorious good Methodist Episcopal Sunday-school here. Nearly two hundred 'regulars,' many of whom are good soldiers in the 'army of the Lord.' Last Sunday, although a wet day, we enlisted over one hundred and fifty in your noble company. You may count on every one of these recruits, for they are all good, brave boys and girls, who will make men and women of the right stamp. Send us a watchword for our

company, Corporal Try!

"Well done, regulars! Stand to your arms! Beware of the enemy! Look out, especially, for four captains who are sly guerrillas. Their names are: Captain Not-now, Captain Only-this-once, Captain Do-as-I-please, and Captain Don't-care. They are sneakish fellows. Watch them and fight them, shouting this watchword, 'We'll all be Christians!' or this one, 'We will all stand up for Jesus!'—J. S. C. says:

"Five of my scholars wish to join your Try Company. They will try not to say 'I can't.' Two say, 'We will try to be good.' Another 'will try to do right.' Little Eliza will 'try to obey ma.' These little folks are such as will try to do what they say. There are a number of others who are going to try a week to see if they can do without saying 'can't.' If they succeed they will ask to join also.

"Putting themselves on trial, eh?" cries the Corporal in great good humor. "Ha! ha! I hope they have proved themselves able, *through grace*, to stand the test. All my soldiers who fight in their own strength fall into Giant I Can't's hands; all who trust in Jesus whip the old fellow as Gen. Grant does the rebels.—Here is a line from Mr. J. M. BARROW to the children of Blissfield, Michigan. He is on his way to Europe. He says:

"I am now with Corporal Try. I am much pleased with him. He will accept you in his company. I want you to keep on in the good old way. Treasure up the instruction you receive, and may God bless and prosper you all."

The Corporal says he likes Mr. Barrow, thinks he is made of working stuff, and will go back to Blissfield on his return from England to work harder than ever.

"Here is a letter from P. E. H. scolding you for teaching the children to hate slavery. What will you do about it, sir?"

Put it in the waste-basket, my Corporal, and pray that the writer may have a ray of light sent into that sleepy hollow which he calls his heart. It must be very dark down there.