

That's what I am going to do in this letter, as a dutiful father, on one of the rocks which my dear boys are sure to sight in the voyage of life, that they may steer safely past.

The rock is—smoking. Now, that is a temptation all boys meet sooner or later, and most of them in this age fall under it. I fell myself, and puffed away for eight years. Thank God! it ended then. My father showed me a good example in that respect, but never pointed out to me the reasons against it, or perhaps I should never have begun.

Boys smoke to be like men, as they long to get out of blouses into knickerbockers, then into jackets and trousers, and lastly into full-fledged coat and waistcoat. Is it mainly to smoke? Not in the true sense of manliness. It is common, but not manly. It used to be considered manly, and was therefore common, to get "as drunk as a lord." Those days have passed away. A man who gets drunk, even though a lord, is now shunned by respectable men.

Smoking is a lesser vice. It is still a "whishonable one; but I feel convinced that the day will come—you may live to see it—when it will be looked upon in its true light, as the function of a chimney, but not of a God-made man.

What is the standard of manliness? Only one; it is to be found in the life of the Perfect Man, Christ Jesus. Did he smoke? No; the habit had not then commenced. Is it likely he would smoke if he came in this smoking age? Not the least likely! Why?

1. The smoker is an unjust steward. The money spent in it is a talent wasted. It is worse than hid in a napkin. The man who hid the one talent had it; but the money spent in tobacco vanishes in smoke. It is gone forever, and produces no good fruit.

2. The smoker by his example, tempts others to be unjust stewards; they in turn influence more, until soon the evil example of one affects ever-widening circles of men all down the ages.

3. It injures health, weakens the stomach, impairs the appetite, removes moisture necessary to digestion, and dulls the palate. Such a violation of the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, would certainly not have Christ's sanction.

4. It limits social intercourse; confines a man often to smoking-rooms and smoking-carriages; and, above all, banishes him often from the softening and elevating society of woman, and gives him an odor and a breath not very pleasant, even when the smoke is over.

5. It is a powerful habit, easy to acquire, but very difficult to give up. I have rarely met a man who would not rather that he had never begun. I have known many who tried hard over and over again, to abandon it, but very few who succeeded. When the habit cannot be indulged, through want of means, or of tobacco, or of opportunity, the man is miserable.

6. It is a dirty habit, for person and clothes, and cannot be part of the cleanliness which is next to godliness.

Blessed is the man whose wants are few and simple. He is so far a free man. Every additional want is a link in the chain of bondage. If there is sense and reason in what I have said—and I'm sure dear mother concurs in every word of it—then I am fully convinced that your desire will be to honor your father and mother in this matter. If, on the other hand, when you reach the age of maturity, you should become convinced, after prayerful consideration, that your duty as a man and as a Christian is to smoke—that it will make you a brighter example for others and a juster steward before God—that it will improve your health and increase your usefulness,—then smoke openly and fearlessly, but not till then.

Yes, it is a noble thing to be a true man, but you will be all the nearer by steering clear of habits which are not worthy of a man. Your affectionate father,
—The Christian.

KEEPING CHILDREN BUSY.

The blessing of abundant occupation is as needful for children as for adults. In nothing do children differ more than in their ability to amuse themselves. A child with an active imagination can play with eager delight with a thousand trifles that children unblest with that faculty, have no conception of utilizing. And we

are mistaken if those juveniles are not the happiest who are compelled by a scarcity of material to invent new and fertile uses for what they do have. Certain it is that so much may be done for a child that he will be dwarfed for life by an over-supply of toys and attention, while if he is thrown in part on his own resources he will have the joy of inventing and increasing amusement for himself.

The kindergarten occupations furnish exhaustless material for the instruction and amusement confined of the little folk. Though a regular course of instruction as to the use of these "gifts" is certainly desirable those who cannot take this course may utilize the kindergarten "gifts" in their nurseries with very great advantage. There are books giving specific instructions as to the employment of each "gift," and any mother or nurse who will read them carefully may have the means at hand of keeping the little brains and fingers happily employed.

Plato, in "The Laws," says: "Now a boy is of all wild beasts the most difficult to manage. For by how much the more he has the fountain of prudence not yet fitted up, he becomes crafty and keen, and the most insolent of all wild beasts. On this account it is necessary to bind him, as it were, with many chains." The habit of industry is one of the best chains with which to bind a boy, and this habit may be formed from the cradle and strengthened through all the growing years. Little chores about the house and garden, not above the boy's strength to do, he is all the better for doing. The stimulus of wages may be used to further him in his willingness to work, and these wages may be applied to the purchase of little indulgences, which the parent would gladly give, but which are more highly prized when earned than when accepted as a gift.

The reading of suitable books is another very strong chain to bind a boy to the practice of virtue, and a girl as well. The long days of childhood cannot be better spent than when growing vigorously in body, in storing up the seeds of knowledge and in forming nuclei about which accumulations of various information may grow. The rudiments of all the sciences may be learned before the child enters his teens. But this depends on the wisdom and care of the parents very largely, and upon the facilities afforded the child. If, instead of being shut up in a school room five hours every day, he is made the companion of an active, intelligent parent and his mental activities directed toward interesting topics, he may advance far more rapidly in intellectual growth and attainment than his fellows moping through the dull routine of the primary school, as it is generally conducted. Horace Greeley's mother told him stories, cited poetry to him and fed his mind with all the treasures of her own, thus cultivating in him a taste for vast and various reading, a taste which he retained to the last.

A printing press, a tool-chest, a scroll saw, pet animals, a set of garden tools, are excellent things for boys to occupy themselves with, but their use requires constant oversight from parents, so that habits of exactness, neatness, of fineness, of thoroughness, and of order, may be formed. Occupation is not intended merely to keep a boy or girl from mischief, but positively to form them to virtue. The knitting and sewing which our grandmothers did in their childhood, the "samplers" they wrought, we smile at now, but in this work they learned what we are trying to teach our children. Handicraft of all sorts is becoming the fashion and childish hands are now taught to draw, to paint, to model, to hammer brass, to embroider, and in this agreeable work, amusement and profit combine.—N. Y. Tribune.

TABLE TALK.

What would you think of a housekeeper who made a practice of mixing nettles or wormwood with her salads, or pouring coal oil into her gravies, and sprinkling ashes over her juicy roasts? You would, of course, think her a poor, crazy woman, whose place was in the asylum. But one spoiled dish on the table is not so bad as to have the comfort of the whole meal taken away by bringing up unpleasant subjects which make you wish you were dining off a crust on "the corner of a house-top" alone, in preference. It is not the right place at which to bring up all the arrears of the day's misfortunes and shortcomings. Be pleas-

ant at meal times, if you cannot any other hour in the day. It is a powerful aid to digestion to have the mind cheery and bright when taking our food. Gloom and ill temper are exactly the reverse of helpful.

It is the hardest on the overworked mother, who too often comes to her meals so worried she has little relish or spirit for eating. So much the more is it the duty of those about her to say encouraging, cheering words that shall be a help to her. If all will try for the hour to lay off care and be happy together, the meal times may be the most pleasant and instructive parts of the day.

Dr. Franklin stated that he derived his peculiar, practical turn of mind from his father's table talk. He was accustomed to take up some profitable subject, or discuss some moral principle, instead of forever talking upon hunting, or trouting, or dining, or neighborhood gossip.

Young Elihu Burritt had his soul fired with a desire to read largely from hearing his father end some old neighbor talking over the old days of the Revolution. If such delightful fascinating tales were found in books, he would master them and win their gold. How nobly he succeeded, is, or ought to be known to every American boy, to whom his example is a legacy.

A neat and happy home table, though covered with the coarsest linen the lousiest may weave, is a memory to which the grown-up children will turn back with delight as something almost sacred. It is one of the "spells of home" that help more than we can ever know, to bind the heart to all that is good and holy, and keep it back from the ways of sin. Let us watch over this educator of our children with a jealous care, and study the matter beforehand, so we may repress whatever would be unpleasant and have topics in our mind to bring forward that will be both pleasant and useful.—Am. Paper.

"IS THAT ALL!"

A carpenter, who had been a constant drinker—"in a moderate way," as he called it—and who was often really drunk, went into a temperance meeting, and was convinced that he had lived a selfish and harmful as well as foolish life. He resolved to give up the drink. He knew his wife was miserable, his children afraid of him, his home shabby and dilapidated, and his debts increasing. He knew that he had helped to make the publican the most "patronized" comfortable, and the publican's wife gay with the silks purchased out of his "fool's pence." He resolved that his own wife should have less reason to complain, and more money to spend. He was earning the moderate wages of thirty shilling a week, but out of that he contrived to spend often six or seven shillings, sometimes more.

After deciding to be a total abstainer he made himself a strong box without hinges, and nailed it up tightly. He left just a small slit in the top through which he could drop his coppers. And many a penny and threepenny-bit he did drop therein. It was his custom whenever he felt tempted to take out of one pocket just the money that he would have to spend to gratify a mere taste or craving, and put it into the other until he should reach home; then he would put it in the box and leave it there untouched. For a year this went on. He kept the box hidden away, and told not his wife of his practice or intention. At the end of the year he was seated by his own fireside after tea, and looking across to his wife, he said, pleasantly, "Jennie, it is just twelve months to-night since I signed the pledge; do you think we are any better off for it?"

"Better off? Why, yes, Charlie."
"How?"
"Why, you are earning more money, and you would not have been made foreman if you had not become so steady and trust-worthy. Then look at the home; we have better furniture now."
"Is that all?"
"The children are better clothed."
"Is that all?" he asked again.
"Why, no, Charlie; they are happier, and so am I."
"Is that all?"
"Well, I am happier, and I think healthier, for I have less anxiety than I used to have."
"Is that all?"
"No, for you are kinder and happier too."
"Is that all?" he again asked.

"No, for we are out of debt, and I have even two pounds in hand."

"Is that all?"
"I don't know anything further, unless you mean that you delight now to go to God's house on Sunday."

"Yes, I do delight in it; and, thank God, I have found out my need of a Saviour, and have found that the Saviour was seeking me. But there is something more that makes me ask whether even that is all."

"What is it?"
"Nellie," he said, to his bright eldest girl, "go into my workshop and open my tool chest. You will see there a box with a slit in it. Bring it."

The daughter soon returned, evidently weighed down by a burden. She placed the box on the table. The mother looked at it wonderingly. Soon it was opened by the hammer and screw-driver, which her husband had at hand. He turned the box carefully over, and out rolled a large number of coppers and silver.

"Count it, wife. That is the money I should have spent in drink during the last twelve months. That is all ours, not the publican's. It is yours. We are all that better off for my signing the pledge."

The wife tremblingly counted the many coins, each one bearing upon it the invisible stamp of self-conquest. When all was told there appeared in many copper and silver pillars the sum of fourteen pounds! This was a large sum to them, and to the wife it was more than a large fortune. Her eyes—moistened with tears of joy, and yet kindled with love and trust—met those of her husband. "Thank God," she said, "for all His mercies. 'Tis not for the money I praise Him, but for giving my dear husband such strength of will and me such peace and gladness."—Frederick Hastings in British Workman.

HINTS TO TEACHERS ON THE CURRENT LESSONS.

(From Peloubet's Select Notes.)
January 4.—Acts. 20: 2-16.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

As this is the first lesson of a series on Paul's travels and work it will be well to spend more time than is usually wise in teaching the framework of the lesson, that the scholars may have clear ideas and a vivid picture of the scenes and events which are to impress the practical truths upon them. It gives reality and power and definiteness to the lessons, and writes them deeper on the memory.

First let some scholar give a brief account of the Acts; another a few words about Paul.

The map. It is well to take an ancient and a modern map and place them side by side. Then trace out Paul's third missionary tour from the beginning. This will enable you to review the preceding history by having the scholars tell what was done at each place.

Then follow out Paul's diary as given in to-day's lesson, noting both the days and the deeds at each place. The lessons of to-day are taught by the events.

We may call the subject,—a Sabbath with an Apostle.

I. On the way (vers. 2-6.) He started from Ephesus, and spent several months in Macedonia. The chief teaching here is on exhortation, to what, the need of it, when to be given, how to be received. Next follows three months in Greece. Here we see how the best of men are sometimes hated and opposed. Paul's wise method of avoiding danger. Emphasis may be laid on the work of Paul all the time, in the midst of his preaching, in urging collections for the poor. The companions of Paul. The blessedness of this companionship and their advantage to him. Note Luke's joining them. Then Paul set a good example in attending the great meetings of God's people (in vers. 6 and 16) Paul proceeds to Troas.

II. A Sabbath with Paul at Troas. (vers. 7-12.) Draw from the scholars the various things that Paul did on this Sabbath. Impress the duty of keeping the Sabbath, of attending church, of listening to the service, of reverent worship, of proper behavior in church, of communion with saints. The delight and profit of the instruction of a great and good man making it worth while to listen all night. There will be other lessons from Eutychus, excuses for him, his wrong, his death, being brought to life. The life-giving power of the Gospel.

III. The departure (vers. 13-16) needs but brief tracing on the map.