

Soon it led him round a corner into a bay that till now he had not seen, and then gradually it dipped downwards on to the rocks beneath. Presently he was able to tread the gravel of the bay that led to the caves. There was the merry party he had left an hour or so before. They greeted him with a shout, but he was unable to respond, for his nerve was gone, his face was pallid with the effort he had made, and his knees quivering beneath him.

He lay down on the sand to rest whilst they went into the cave. And as he rested he asked himself the question, Was this an answer to prayer? It had come so naturally, was it not a mere coincidence? No, he felt it was an answer to his cry. Five times had he stumbled upwards, each time missing the road. The slightest change in his course might have caused him to miss it again. Whatever others might say, there was in him a deep inner conviction that God heard and helped him.

It was a turning-point in his life, God had met him. He had realized his presence and power as never before, and he was glad. Now he would be God's servant, and live for him.

And in after years, in many a trial through which he had to pass, the remembrance of this deliverance inspired him with a devout confidence in our father's care.

'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths.'

A Child's Hymn.

(To the Editor 'Northern Messenger'.)

Dear Sir,—The following beautiful child's hymn was taught to me by my mother some sixty years ago, she having learned it when a little girl, nearly one hundred years since. Having never seen it in print, I send it for the benefit of the youthful readers of the 'Northern Messenger':—

How glad am I, I was not born
A Hindu or a slave,
To wander in a state forlorn
Down to an early grave.

I might have been Arabia's child,
The Koran taught to read,
Or been an Indian fierce and wild,
In wars to fight and bleed.

I might have worshipped at the shrine
Of dreadful Juggernaut,
Been thrown to crocodiles or swine
In some devoted spot.

But now my favored lot has been
In a dear Christian home,
Where I am taught the plague of sin
For which Christ did atone.

Where pious parents day by day
Teach me to love the Lord,
And evermore to watch and pray
And read God's Holy Word.

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Lin Nichols's Mark.

(Sheldon C. Stoddard, in 'The Christian Endeavor World'.)

The ice on Clarkson Pond had been splendid for weeks, and the young people had enjoyed it thoroughly. The pond was situated about midway between Silver Creek and Barker's Eddy, two thrifty inland villages some three miles apart. It was a large, smooth sheet of water several acres in extent, forming an almost ideal skating-ground for a longer or shorter period almost every winter, and at such times invariably the favorite resort of the young people of both villages, on Saturday afternoons especially.

As each village had its high school, justly its special pride, and as each school had its baseball nine, also its special pride, it was perhaps entirely natural that a certain amount of rivalry should exist between the young people of the two towns, and that much zealous championing should result therefrom as occasion seemed to demand. Natural or not, the rivalry existed, though usually in a good-natured way, but finally culminated in an object-lesson which those who witnessed will not soon forget.

Down near the dam there was always a place where the ice was very thin, with usually a small space of open water, caused, doubtless, by the presence of a spring of comparatively warm water. This place had always been shunned, as the surrounding ice was known to be treacherous. But the long-continued period of fine skating had taken away something of the first zest of the sport, and any new excitement was hailed with enthusiasm. Just how it started no one seemed to know, but it certainly became known that certain individuals had cut their marks very close to the 'spring hole,' as the place described was always called. The 'marks' were of course those cut by the skater as he shot over the ice at his utmost speed.

Sam Gleeson, of the Barker's Eddy school, had cut his mark within six feet of the open water, a feat which no one as yet had dared equal, much less excel; and the 'Barkers,' as their 'nine' with its following were called, were jubilant. Sam was captain of the ball team and the best skater in his school, a good enough fellow usually, but a little inclined to be arrogant and overbearing. The 'Barkers' had won the tie game from the 'Silvernines' just before the winter snow had made the diamond useless.

'Of course we're ahead,' said Dick Slade, an enthusiastic Barkerite, 'on the diamond or on the ice; we're bound to be.'

'Of course we are, everywhere,' echoed Nettie Miles; 'we just can't help it.'

'Just you wait till Lin Nichols gets back,' growled Will Edwards, a disgruntled Silverniner. 'You think great things all at once because you got the tie game, don't you?'

'Wait a little longer,' sang black-eyed May Eaton, gracefully cutting M. E. on the ice as she skated. 'Lin can beat the whole crowd of you on skates.'

'There's a mark waiting for him up by the spring hole,' said Sam Gleeson a little vaingloriously as he circled by.

'My, but I wish Lin would come!' said Will Edwards to a little group of the faithful. 'That crowd is suffering to be let down a notch or two. I'd try it myself if I was half a skater. Lin can go all round

me. He's coming now!' he shouted a moment later. 'That's his whistle! He's always whistling "Annie Laurie"! Let's meet him and put him on to the situation.'

Whistling cheerily as he swung along at a rapid walk, Lin Nichols came down the path to the pond, with his skates slung over his shoulder. He was a tall, athletic young fellow of perhaps eighteen, with steady grey eyes and a quiet, pleasant way that every one liked. The group greeted him enthusiastically, and at once proceeded to 'put him on to the situation.' He listened attentively.

'So Sam has cut his mark within six feet of the "spring hole," has he?' he said when the situation was carefully explained. 'I did not think that any one who knew Clarkson Pond could be so foolhardy,' he added quietly. Then he said slowly, 'And you want me to beat him, I suppose?'

No one said anything for a moment.

'I do believe Lin is going to back out,' whispered May to Will. But Lin heard, and his face flushed.

Then Billy Snowe spoke up.

'But it held Sam—but it cracked some—but you can skate faster than Sam—and—and—'

'"But," Billy,' corrected Lin; '"but" seems to be your word just now.'

'But they got the tie,' persisted Billy, in whose usually placid breast the memory of the late defeat rankled strongly. 'And now they're getting just awful. Just hear 'em beller!' and he looked wrathfully at the shouting 'Barkers.'

The group nodded sympathetically at Billy. Lin snapped the skate-levers to their places and straightened up. He had just returned after an absence of several days on business for his mother; his father had died two years before. He turned to his mates, and said slowly: 'Getting one tie doesn't decide everything; and as for this great exploit of Sam's, I consider it simply useless, foolish bravado. If there was anything to justify the action, it would be different. Until I think there is,' he added deliberately, though again his face flushed, 'you will find "my mark" a good, honest distance this side the safety limit.' He skated swiftly out a little way, then back on a long, graceful curve.

'You needn't think I don't mind,' he said, looking earnestly at the group and particularly, perhaps, at May as she pulled impatiently at the ends of her scarlet scarf—and her black eyes had a sudden bright spark in them, for the challenging shouts were getting loud and strong, 'but I made a promise to the little mother at home that fits just such occasions as this, and I'm going to keep it,' and with a sudden resolute dash he was away up the pond.

A louder shout, this time plainly a taunting one, came from the Barker's Eddy crowd as they saw the champion refuse the gauntlet. Lin heard it, and he rankled. Strong and active to an unusual degree for one of his age, he was the acknowledged leader of his faction in all athletic sports, and with his pleasant, quiet way he was a universal favorite. 'Taking a back seat,' as he called it, was something new to him; but his own good sense told him he was right; and besides, there was his promise, and he shut his teeth resolutely; but he winced as he thought of May Eaton and her half-concealed scorn. They had always been the best of friends, and had passed many a pleasant hour to-