

The Boy and the Sparrow.

Once a sweet boy sat and swung on a limb;
 On the ground stood a sparrow-bird looking at him;
 Now, the boy he was good, but the sparrow was bad,
 So he shied a big stone at the head of the lad,
 And it killed the poor boy, and the sparrow was glad.
 Then the little boy's mother flew over the trees—
 Tell me, where is my little boy, sparrow-bird, please?
 He is safe in my pocket," the sparrow bird said,
 And another stone shied at the fond mother's head,
 And she fell at the feet of the wicked bird, dead.
 You imagine, no doubt, that the tale I have mixed,
 But it wasn't by me that the story was fixed;
 'Twas a dream a boy had after killing a bird,
 And he dreamed it so loud that I heard every word,
 And I jotted it down as it really occurred.
 —Good Words.

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Methodist Book and Publishing House, Toronto.
 140 COCKERILL ST. S. F. HURARY, 2176 St. Catherine St., Montreal.
 Wesleyan Book Room, Halifax, N.S.

Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.
 Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 3, 1898.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

DECEMBER 11, 1898.

THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH.

ANNOUNCED BY THE PROPHETS.

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."
 "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."—Isa. 9. 6, 7.
 I suppose many of you have heard the great oratorio of the Messiah, or at least have heard the glorious anthem in our topic text. After the sweetness of the promise, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given," repeated over and over again, comes that marvellous outburst of music when the whole strength of the organ and orchestra and chorus come down the words, "He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." It is one of the most sublime announcements that ever was made, and the music that accompanies it is worthy of the theme.
 Isaiah, to whom these words are attributed, has been called the greatest of the prophets—the fifth evangelist. It is as though he really saw the very things which he described. Many prophets and sages and seers announced the coming of the Messiah, but none so clearly and brightly and strongly as he.
 How strange it seems that it was a Child upon whose shoulders the government of the world should be laid. It is

one of those things which no one could fully understand, but God in his own time and way made it plain. Milton, in his splendid ode on the Nativity of Jesus speaks of the "Blessed Babe" as over-coming all the gods of the heathen and destroying their power.
 When I was in old Cairo, in Egypt, the porter of the city came to open its gate carrying on his shoulder a great key as big as a club. It instantly occurred to me that this was the meaning of this text. Upon the shoulders of the Son of God are placed the keys of the universe, the might, the power, the authority. But between the prophecy of Isaiah and its fulfilment in Christ more than four long centuries were to pass. Other prophets rose and foretold the coming of the Christ, but the world grew almost weary waiting till at length in the fulness of time God sent forth his Son to fulfil his ancient promise.

TOBY TOMPKINS IN THE PARSONAGE WELL.

BY REV. EDWARD A. RAND.

Poor Toby Tompkins! He had come out of a saloon in a bewildered state of mind, and staggering across the street, wandered up and down a lot owned by the town and known as the parsonage lot. Here had stood the parsonage in days when the town paid for the minister's support, and also owned the house in which he lived. Long ago the house had been taken down. The old parsonage well had not been "taken up," but remained neglected, and a menace to any one who might cross the lot in the night.

Into this old parsonage well, as no one had ever actually fallen, it seemed to be taken for granted that no one ever would tumble; and it was neglected. But how about Toby Tompkins, not only a Tompkins in the dark, but a Tompkins drunk? It was one of those nights when the moon is supposed to shine, and consequently small towns do not light their streets. This night, the sky was clouded. The moon was somewhere behind the clouds, playing "hide-and-seek" with the stars. If it had been openly shining, though, that would not have helped Toby.

He staggered about helplessly, as if lunging at an enemy that he never could reach. All the time he was coming nearer to the well, coming nearer, nearer. One moment he halted on the decayed boards that pretended to shut in the well; and then, with a crash, down he went. Fortunately, there was not much water in the old well; but there was very much more than he for years had cared to have anything to do with, and enough to chill the poor man through and through up to his shoulders.

"Hark, boys! What's that?" asked Harry Dame.
 He, with John Trelick and Joe Capen, was going home from a meeting of the young folk's temperance society, the "Cold Water Cadets." The boys had just reached the parsonage lot, and heard a mixture of the strangest sounds,—groans, moans, outcries, dismal appeals, all coming out of the ground somewhere.
 "Put, boys, put!" shrieked John Trelick, a timid, nervous chap who had lately been reading about the witch of Endor.

He had sprung away about a dozen feet, when Joe Capen rushed after him, and, grabbing him, cried, "Hold on, John! Don't make a fool of yourself. There's trouble, and we may be wanted."
 "Oh—oh—oh!" exclaimed John, ashamed to run further, and going with Joe, yet shivering like the dried leaves on the corn-stalk in a November wind.

"This way, boys! This way!" Harry was shouting. He had entered the lot, and was cautiously moving ahead, suspicious that the sounds came from the old well.

"Ay—ay!" boldly sang out Joe Capen, pulling along his shivering ally, who was shaking almost as badly as poor Toby Tompkins.

"It's the well, boys, I know," cried Harry. "Look out!"

"No doubt of it," said Joe, coming up. Jest here, the moon sedately and complacently put her head out of a cloud, as if she had not been foolishly frolicking with the stars, and seemed to say, "Can I do anything?"

"Who—who's here?" shouted Harry, cautiously calling at something before him, something black in the moonlight, something uneven, a hole with edges all broken.

"Booh—booh—booh!" groaned the half-sober Toby down in the well.

"Boys, rouse the neighbourhood!" called Harry. "We want a ladder, ropes, lantern—"
 He did not stop to finish his sentence, and Joe Capen did not stop to hear him. Away they went to get help.

John was left by the well, trembling

less, but timid. Undecided, wishing he knew what he had better do, he finally concluded that Harry and Joe would get a! the help that would be needed, and he started for home, running by every dark recess as if expecting that it would turn into another well's mouth and discharge a dragon at him.

Harry and Joe were soon back at the well, and an abundance of help came with them. Toby must be taken from the well, of course, everybody warmly asserted, but everybody said it would be a "job." Yes, a hard job. It took Harry's father, and Joe's father, and Harry's "Uncle Henry," and Joe's "big brother Jim," and Farmer Trefethen and his three hired men, and a stout ladder, and Bartholomew Barry down in the well, and a rope under Toby Tompkins' arms, and one lantern hung down in the well, and one lantern at the top of the well.

"All ready!" shouted Bartholomew down in the well. "I've got the rope around him, and I'll stiddy him on the ladder if I can. H'ist now, all, h'ist!"
 Didn't they pull? Farmer Trefethen and his three men pulled, and Jim Capen pulled, and Uncle Henry pulled, and—, "Hold on, there!" shouted the sepulchral Bartholomew. "Don't pull so hard. You'll do more than the king's oxen, and pull this 'ere well up by the roots. Stiddy, now! H'ist! Up—she—rises."
 Up he rose; yes, up went Toby, urged by Bartholomew if he had "one grain of a sober idee" in his head to hold on "that ladder good."

It was considered to be a wonderful deliverance. Even the great Squire Manson, chairman of the board of "selectmen," going home late from his office, dignified, tall, and stately, and not a man to speak about trifles, halted as he came up to the group of rescuers still lingering by the lot. He learned of their heroism, and made a long speech of thanks to them. Then he added, "And, fellow-citizens, I think the town ought to stop up that hole. I will see that the well is properly secured, and of no citizen of this town shall it be said that he was permitted to fall into such a trap." This was oracularly declared by the squire.

"Three cheers for the cheerman of our board of select-men!" shov ed Bartholomew, and amid the echoe of this unsolicited ovation Squire Manson proudly walked home.

Joe Capen had heard every word uttered by the squire, and began to comment on the speech when he and Harry Dame were alone.

"Now, Harry, I've got an idee."

"What is it, Joe?"

Joe told Harry his idee.

"Now, Harry you want to go with me?"

"Certainly. You know the motto of our 'Cold Water Cadets' is, 'Always at it.' I'll go with you."

In about five minutes from that time Squire Manson heard steps, and looked up from the columns of The Weekly Busy Bee, from which hive he was getting stores of wisdom's honey. He saw Joe Capen and Harry Dame standing before him.

Joe was spokesman, a shade of fear and trembling clouding his face. "Squire Manson, we heard you say at the parsonage well that it ought to be closed up, and you would do it. Now—" Harry had told Joe to insert here the request, "Excuse the question," which Joe did insert. "Now—excuse the question—but don't you think the saloon where the man got his rum should be closed up? I mean the man who tumbled into the well."

The squire hemmed, blushed, wiped his forehead, and said, "Now, boys, I don't think the best way is to shut up the saloon. People will buy and sell, and all—all—all—"

"But there is a law against it, sir," said Harry, boldly.

"Oh—ahem—yes; but let us take a statesmanlike view of it." The squire rolled out "statesman" in ponderous tones. "The point is, what is good policy? Now, one of my fellow-citizens, who—who—is a drinking man, said he and a dozen others had agreed that if we did not shut up the saloon they would always conduct themselves temperately, and no harm would come. If we shut up the saloon, it would anger them, and—"

"May I ask the name of that man?" inquired with dignity one of the squire's fellow-citizens present, Joe Capen.

"Oh, it was Toby Tompkins."

"He's the man that has conducted himself temperately, and got into the well, squire."

"What, Toby? I didn't see the man who was taken out. They had taken him off when I came up. What, Toby?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry; "and when we spoke to him—we boys, cadet boys,—he told us he would sign our pledge, though it might not do any good if the saloon kept open."

"Then the saloon shall be shut," and the squire, as he spoke, banged the table with his big fist.

The saloon was shut up. Toby signed the pledge. He kept it.

None of Our Business.

(A little girl was heard to finish her evening prayer with these words: "And I saw a poor little girl on the street today, cold and barefooted: but it's none of our business,—is it, God?")

"None of our business!" wandering and sinful,
 All through the streets of the city they go,
 Hungry and homeless in the wild weather—
 None of our business! Dare we say so?

"None of our business!" Children's wan faces,
 Haggard and old with their suffering and sin;
 Hold fast your darlings on tender, warm bosoms,
 Sorrow without, but the home light within.

What does it matter that some other woman—
 Some common mother—in bitter despair,
 Walls in a garret, or sits in a cellar,
 Too broken-hearted for weeping or prayer?

"None of our business!" Sinful and fallen,
 How they may jostle us close on the street!
 Hold back your garment! Scorn? They are used to it;
 Pass on the other side lest you should meet.

"None of our business!" Oh, then, the music;
 On with the feasting, though hearts break forlorn;
 Somebody's hungry, somebody's freezing,
 Somebody's soul will be lost ere the morn.

Somebody's dying (on with the dancing);
 One for earth's pottage is selling his soul;
 One for a bauble has bartered his birth-right,
 Selling his all for a pitiful dole.

Ah, but One goeth abroad on the mountain,
 Over lone deserts, with burning deep sands!
 Seeking the lost ones (it is His business),
 Bruised thought his feet are, and torn though his hands.

Thorn-crowned his head and his soul scrow-stricken,
 (Saving men's souls at such infinite cost),
 Broken his heart for the grief of the nations;
 It is his business saving the lost!
 —Exchange.

A PUZZLED PROFESSOR.

The tale of the astronomer, says The Christian Endeavour World, whose waggish student pasted a firefly on the lens of his telescope, is equalled by that of the entomologist whose tricky class presented him with a composite bug for classification, made of the body, legs, and wings of different insects stuck together, and which he unhesitatingly pronounced a "humbug." The third story of the trio has been found.

Professor Zanker, the famous orientalist, one day received a copy of an inscription which a friend and admirer of his declared he had found in a mediaeval tomb. The sender asked him to decipher the mysterious extract, promising to forward the valuable old MS. as soon as he got it from its owner, a relative of his. The inscription ran as follows:

TVOY ERA WOH, ROSEFORP ONINROM DOOG

For three days the professor puzzled his brains without making any sense of it. Then his little son, a fourth-form boy, came into his father's study and spied the strange writing on the desk. After looking at it for a while, he asked his father since when he had taken to writing backwards.

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished professor.

"Why," replied the lad, "if you read this from right to left, it runs thus, 'Good morning, professor, how are you?'"

Mrs. Murray—"Give me tin-cents worth av ham." Grocer—"Sugar cured, madam?" Mrs. Murray—"No! I want some that has niver bin dizzed."