

and threw herself on a chair with a weary sigh. "I wish that there were stepping-stones over the river of trouble," cried she, "for I don't see how poor folk like us are ever to get across."

"There are stepping-stones, dear Martha," said her mother; "and many a one has found them that would have been drowned in trouble without them."

"Stepping-stones! what do you mean?" cried Martha, looking with surprise at the quiet sufferer as she spoke.

"There are three, my child, that God himself has set in the dreary waters that his people may pass in safety over the difficult way. They are—prudence, patience, and prayer. By *prudence* we shun many a trouble which overwhelms the careless and giddy. By *patience* we get over those troubles which God sends to prove and to try us. And when the bitter waters rise high and we feel as if we must sink beneath them, then the Christian, trembling and weary, finds firm footing in *prayer*."

Dear reader, at some period of your journey through life you will have to pass the river of trouble; may you then seek and find these safe stepping-stones—*prudence, patience, and prayer*.

Sunday-School Advocate.

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A TRUE BOY.



LIKE *true* children. Children who stick to their principles as limpets stick to rocks, who cannot be laughed, or coaxed, or teased, or bought to do wrong, are true children. I wish all my readers were *true*. I will tell you of a boy who proved true when he was tried.

This boy was a German, named Hans. It was his business to watch sheep. One day a little youth richly dressed found him near the woods and asked him if he knew of a birdsnest thereabouts.

"Yes, I saw one this morning made of yellow straws, lined with moss, and five pretty eggs in it."

"Charming! charming!" said the rich boy. "Show me that pretty nest."

"I can't do that," said Hans, "because I promised old Maurice not to show it to any one."

Now this rich youth was a prince, and at this point his attendants came up, and on hearing his story they told Hans who he was, and commanded him to point out the nest.

"No," said Hans, "I can't break my promise."

Then the prince held out a large gold coin and promised it to Hans if he would tell. But Hans was firm. The gold was a great temptation, because it would buy many things for his poor father; but his word was worth more than gold, and he would not break it.

The prince's servants were angry, and one of them seized Hans by the collar and threatened to whip him very cruelly if he would not show the prince the birdsnest. But Hans thought he could more easily bear to be whipped than to break his promise, so he would not tell where the birdsnest could be found.

At last the prince's teacher said, "Perhaps if old Maurice knew the prince wished to see the nest he would give Hans leave to show it."

Hans thought he would, and promised to ask his permission in the evening. If he obtained it he would call at the prince's castle and conduct him to the nest the next day.

This was all the prince could persuade Hans to do. So he had to be content, and went away surprised to find the poor shepherd boy so particular about sticking to his word.

The next day Hans, having easily gained the consent of old Maurice to show the nest, walked to the castle. The prince went to see the nest and was delighted with the five little eggs, which he was wise enough to leave where they were, so that the little bird-mother might hatch them into birds.

The prince's father was so pleased with Hans that he took him from the sheep-fold and sent him to school. He wanted him to grow up into a true man, for he knew that very few such men are found in courts. The books say Hans stuck to his principles all through life, and became a learned and useful man.

I hope my children admire his conduct enough to resolve that, God helping them, they will stick to their principles all the days of their lives. Be *true*, be true, my children.



EDITORIAL COUNCIL-CHAMBER.

"Envious and spiteful, eh?" said Mr. Forrester the other day as he rested his chin on the top of his humble cane. Mr. Forrester, by the way, carries the homeliest cane you ever saw. Nobody ever gave him a gold-headed cane, so he carries an oak stick made from the timbers of the old Rigging Loft of famous Methodist memory in New York.

"Who is envious and spiteful? Nobody in our Advocate family it is to be hoped," whispers Corporal Try, wiping the sweat from his pale brow.

"I trust not," replies the Squire; "I would like to believe you have not a single child who would act as Gilbert Wakelin did."

"How was that, Squire?" asks the Corporal, who is as wide awake to hear a story as any Miss Merryface in our family.

"Well, you see, Corporal," said the Squire, "Gilbert had a school-fellow named Willie, who owned a most capital sled. The boys all gave it the name of being the best sled in the village. I think it was, for in all the sled-races Willie came in ahead of everybody. Gilbert didn't like this at all. He envied Willie very much. He might as well have put a live coal into his heart as this envious feeling, for it burned up all his peace and all his good feelings."

"Gilbert now teased his father to buy him a new sled. As soon as it came home he dragged it out, and, meeting Willie, said:

"See here, Mr. Will, I've got a sled that will beat yours all to nothing."

"Willie laughed and replied, 'I guess mine has too much iron in it to be beaten quite to nothing.'

"I guess my sled went into snow-banks either," said Gilbert with a sneer, which Willie felt a little, because a day or two before he had run over head and ears into a snow-bank while sledding, very much to the amusement of all the boys. But he kept his temper and replied:

"Perhaps not. You will have the benefit of my experience."

"Well," rejoined Gilbert, feeling cross because Willie kept his temper, 'we'll see how strong your sled is one of these days.'

"When Gilbert's new sled was tried it proved to be so nearly a match for Willie's that it brought its owner in first half the time. This vexed the envious boy still more. He wanted to be first always and everywhere. So he brooded over the matter until he said to one or two of his chums one day, 'I'll break Willie's sled to pieces, see if I don't.'

"Phoo! you don't dare do that," replied one of the boys.

"Don't I? Wait and see," said Gilbert.

"Willie often left his sled in the hall of the school over night so that it might be handy for use at recess and after school. Gilbert knew this, and one morning he slyly carried the sled into the wood-shed, and taking the ax, broke it into fragments in presence of his chums, saying as he did it, 'There, didn't I tell you I'd do it!'

"Well, he was a spiteful fellow truly," observed the Corporal. "If he belonged to my company I'd call a council of war, try him by court-martial, and see if I could not get him drummed out of my noble army."

"Ah, Corporal! Haven't you a little spite in your own nature?" asks Mr. Forrester, laughing.

"Not a bit," replies the Corporal, "but I'm very much afraid of the infection of such tempers as those of Gilbert. Such a boy would corrupt and destroy a dozen others, and I would like to shut him outside of my company as they shut lepers out of cities."

"That's very well put for you, Mr. Corporal; but wouldn't it be better to keep him and make a good boy of him?" rejoins Mr. Forrester.

"If he wanted to be a good boy I'd keep him if he had as many faults as he has nails on his toes," says the Corporal; "but a boy who won't try to improve himself, who is indeed bent on doing wrong, I can't either keep in or admit into my company. No, sir. None of your willfully wicked boys for me. I want boys, and girls too, who are trying, by the grace of God, to be good boys and girls. I go for helping those who help themselves. All others I pity. I beg them to pity themselves, and begin trying for better things. Until they do that they can't come into my company."

The Corporal, no doubt, is correct. A boy who, like Gilbert, is bent on indulging his bad feelings is not a fit boy to admit to the Try Company. What say you, my children? Is a *willfully* wicked child fit to join our Try Company? Speak! all of you.

"No, sir!" is the answer I receive in my heart from hundreds of thousands of lips. The children and the Corporal agree. They know that conduct like Gilbert's should exclude any child from the noble army of trying ones. And the worst of the case is that such *willful* wickedness will exclude from the kingdom of Jesus. Let us all pray this prayer, "O Lord, give willfully wicked children right hearts. Grant also to help those who are trying to please, love, and serve thee."

Now, Corporal, read some of your many letters.

"J. L., of —, says:

"Your Advocate has been a gleam of sunshine during many dark and dreary hours, and especially your 'Conversation Corner.' We are delighted with the Corporal's remarks, and we have come to the conclusion that he intends to spend the remainder of his days in encouraging the children of our land to seek the Saviour while young. We trust that he will range the blissful fields of glory with many stars in his crown of never-fading glory. Our beloved pastor held a protracted meeting here last winter, and many of the teachers and scholars were among the seekers of religion. Now, we are happy to say that the most of them are living Christian lives."

That is good news, Miss L. The Corporal smiles one of his most pleasant smiles as he reads it. May the recruits soon become veterans in Christ's army!

"C. H. F., of —, writes:

"I joined the Church two years ago last March, but I have not lived as I ought all the time; but I will try to do better after this."

Charlie must keep on fighting until he enters heaven. If temptation conquers him to-day he must up and at it again. But he must not let evil beat. He need not. By praying hard and watching much he may gain strength to conquer first, last, and always. Courage! my Christian boy. You and Brother Albert must be valiant for Jesus.

"MARGARET V. writes:

"I have been sick more than a year. I cannot go to Sunday-school. I try to be good and love Jesus. 'Tis very hard to be sick, but I try to think it is all for the best."

It is hard to be sick through long weary months, but it is much easier to be sick with Christ in the heart to comfort than it is to be well and wicked. Nothing is harder than the service of sin. Margaret's photo and picture are all right.