

Boyhood Games in the Days of Shakespeare

BY JAMES L. LEDBETTER.

That Shakespeare took an interest in the sports and pastimes of his day is shown by the frequency with which he refers to them by way of illustration. Some of the games in which, no doubt, as a boy he took part are still in popular use to-day. A few of these are known to us under changed names; others have lost some of the distinguishing features which gave them charm in the olden times. The childish sport of see-sawing was known as "riding the wild mare." The couplet that we hear chanted now by those engaged in this pleasant occupation,

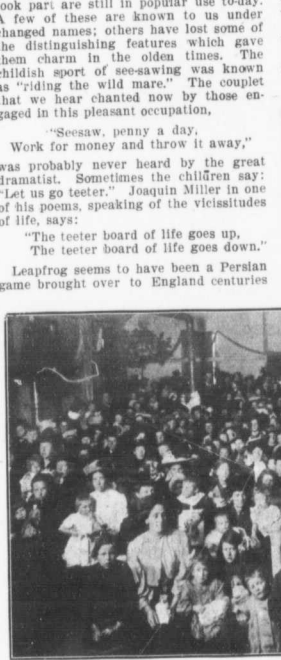
"See-saw, penny a day,
Work for money and throw it away,"

was probably never heard by the great dramatist. Sometimes the children say: "Let us go teeter." Joaquin Miller in one of his poems, speaking of the vicissitudes of life, says:

"The teeter board of life goes up,
The teeter board of life goes down."

Leapfrog seems to have been a Persian game brought over to England centuries

ago, and played now just as it was then. King Henry V. said: "If I could win a lady at leapfrog or by vaulting into my saddle with my armor on my back, I should quickly leap into a wife."



THE CRADLE ROLL, BOON AVENUE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

The objections made nowadays to the popular game of football are not of such modern origin as one might suppose. In 1349 it was prohibited by a public edict because it interfered with the progress of archery. It had its attendant dangers also, since we find James I. issuing this decree: "From this court I debar all rough and violent exercises, as the football, meeter for laming than making able the users thereof." Occasionally instead of a ball covered with leather, the boys would use one made of a blown bladder, inside of which were beans, which made a rattling noise as it was kicked about.

It is interesting to learn that spinning the top was not only an old-time amusement but that it had its moral uses as well. Mr. Stevens informs us that "a large top was kept in every village to be whirled in frosty weather, that the peasants might be kept warm by exercise and out of mischief when they could not work." Other writers make mention of "parish-top" and the "great town tops."

Tennis was much in favor in court circles, and the establishment of tennis

courts was countenanced by the example of royalty. With Charles II, especially the sport was a diversion. A historical event is recorded in connection with this game. When King Henry V. was meditating war against France, the Dauphin, by an ambassador, sent him as a gift some tennis balls, accompanied by an insulting message, intimating that he was better skilled in tennis than in the art of war. Shakespeare makes Henry thus reply:

"When we have matched our rackets to these balls,

We will in France, by God's grace, play a set

Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard."

Hide-and-seek was called hide-fox and all-after. Sometimes it was known as all-hid, all hid. What we call blind man's buff had various names—barrie-racket, or are you all hid? But the general term was hoodman blind. As shown in old pictures, the players formerly had long hoods; the hoodman drew his over his head, while the others used their hands to buffet him. Hence the term "hoodwink." —Epworth Herald.

In the midst of all our privileges we are apt to forget these children of terrible

Epworth Agents

We are very grateful to our Epworth Leagues that have accepted our suggestion in the matter of appointing an agent for the paper in the local societies. In our last number we published the first instalment of our list, and the second will be found below.

Will you interest yourself sufficiently in this to see if your Society is represented, and if it is not, kindly ask your President why no Agent has been appointed? Under date of June 15th, the Editor wrote a personal letter to every Epworth on the matter, and the response has been very promising. It will not be wholly satisfactory, however, until every Young People's Society has its regularly appointed Agent to act in the interests of the paper. Full particulars will be sent each Agent as soon as the name and address are received. Don't say that your League is too small, that it doesn't matter, that there's no hurry, or make any such excuse; but fall in line and help increase the circulation of the paper until the subscription list is what it ought to be—a credit to the young people of Methodism.

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"Love never asks how much must I do, but how much can I do."