

THE YOUNG ENGINEER.

A MOTHER'S STORY.

(From the 'Youth's Companion.')

"The young man you met at the gate, sir? Yes, that is my son—my boy Jack.

"You noticed the scars on his face, sir, and thought, maybe, that they spoiled features meant to be handsome?"

"Ah, sir! that was because you did not know. Why, those red marks make him more beautiful to me now than when a baby in my arms, with yellow curls, and laughing eyes, and a skin like a rose-leaf, the people hurrying in and out of the trains would turn to look and smile at him, and praise him to each other, speaking low, maybe, but not too low for a mother's quick, proud ears to hear.

"For we lived in a little house close by the station, and when I heard the whistle of his father's train I used to snatch the boy from his cradle, or off the floor where he sat with his little playthings, and run down to the farther end of the long depot, where the engine always halted, to get the smile and loving word that my heart lived on all day.

"Not the least bit afraid was the baby of all the whistling and clanging of the bells, the groaning of the wheels and puffing of the steam. He would laugh and spring so in my arms that I could scarcely hold him, till his father would reach down sometimes and lift him up into the engineer's cab, and kiss him for one precious minute, and then toss him down to me again.

"When he grew a little older he was never playing horse or soldier like the other little fellows around; it was always a railway train that he was driving. All the smoothest strips out of my billets of kindling wood went to build tracks over the kitchen floor, hither and thither, crossing and re-crossing each other.

"Don't move my switch, mother dear," he used to cry out to me. "You'll wreck my train for sure!"

"So I had to go softly about my work, with scarce a place sometimes to set my foot. And all the chairs in the house would be ranged for cars, the big rocker, with the tea-bell tied to its back, for the engine; and there he would sit perched up by the hour together, making believe that he was attending to the valves and shouting to the fireman.

"I shall never forget the first time his father took him to ride on the engine. Jack had begged over and over to go, but his father always bade him to wait till he was a little older. So I had said:

"Don't tease father any more, Jack, dear." And, like the true little heart he was, he had not said another word about it for a matter of six months or more.

"But that day such a wistful look came into his face, and he pulled himself up tall and straight, and said quite softly, his voice trembling a little, "Father, do you think I am grown enough now?"

"Looking at him, I saw two tears in his pretty eyes. I think his father saw them, too, for he turned to me in a hurry, and said he:

"We meet the up-train at Langton, Mary, and Will Brow will bring the little chap back all straight, I know. What do you say?"

"What could I say but yes? At supper time he was back again; but he could not eat. His eyes were like stars, and there was a hot, red spot on each cheek, so that I feared he would be ill; and I had thought he would never be done talking, but now he said scarce a word.

"What was it like, Jackie?" I asked him.

"O mother," he said, "it wasn't like anything!" He sat still for a minute thinking; then he said, "Unless it was like—that you read last Sunday."

"And what was that, Jack?" I asked, for I had quite forgotten.

"Don't you know, mother? The wings of the wind."

"That was not his last ride on the engine by many times; for, as he

grew older, his father would take him often on Saturdays or other half-holidays. He was perfectly trusty and obedient. I believe he would have had his right hand cut off sooner than have meddled with anything; but he knew every valve, and screw, and gauge, and watched every turn of his father's hand, and learned the signals all along the line, so that my husband said to me more than once:

"I believe in my heart, Mary, that if I was to be struck dead on the engine Jack could rush her through without a break!"

"He was in school, and learning fast; but, out of hours, he was always studying over books about machinery and steam. Such an odd child as he was, with thoughts far beyond his years! Sometimes, sitting here by myself, I go over in my mind the strange things he used say to me in those days.

"I remember that one evening he had been reading for a long time in some book that he had got out of the public library; but by-and-by he stopped and leaned his head on his hand, looking into the coals. All at once—

"Mother," said he, "isn't it a wonderful thing that God could trust men with it?"

"With what, Jack?"

"With the steam—the power in it, I mean! It was a long time before He did. But when the right time came, and somebody listened, then He told."

"O mother," said he, with his eyes shining, "what must it have been to be James Watt, and to listen to such a secret as that?"

"In a minute he spoke again.

"And it's never safe to forget to listen, because we can't know when He might speak, or what there might be to hear!"

"I could not answer him for a choking in my throat, but I laid down my knitting and put my arm around him; and he looked up into my face with something in his eyes that I never forgot.

"We were getting on well then. The little house and garden were almost paid for; and we thought that nowhere in the world were happier people than we, or a brighter, cosier home. My husband and I were always talking of this and that to be done for Jack as soon as the last payment should be made. But before the money was due my husband came home sick one day.

"Don't be frightened, Mary," he said. "I shall be better to-morrow."

"But he only grew worse next day. It was a lung fever that he had, and for many days we thought he must die. Yet he rallied after a time—though he kept his hacking cough—and sat up and moved about the house, and at last thought himself strong enough to take his place again. But that was too much, for at the end of the first week he came home and fell fainting on the threshold.

"It's of no use, Mary," he said, after he came to himself. "I can't run the engine; and if I could, it isn't right for people's lives to be trusted to such weak hands as mine!"

"He never did any regular work after that, though he lived for a year.

"Young as he was, Jack was my stay and comfort through that dark time. My poor husband had matters in his mind that he longed to speak to me about; but I always put him off, for I could not bear to listen to anything like his going away from us.

"But at last, the very day before the end came, as I sat by his bed holding his hands in mine, he said, very gently but firmly, "Mary, wife, I think you must let me speak to you to-day!"

"I fell to crying as if my heart would break, and he drew a pitiful sigh that went like a sword through my breast; yet I could not stop the sobs. Then Jack rose up from the little stool where he had sat so quietly that I had almost forgotten he was there, and came and touched me.

"Mother! dear mother!" he said; and, as I looked, I saw his face per-

fectly white, but there were no tears in his eyes.

"Mother," he said again, "please go away for a little while. I can hear what father wants to say."

"You will think me cowardly, sir, but I did as the child bade me. I left the door ajar, and I could hear my husband's weak voice, though I could not understand the words, and then my brave boy's answers, clear and low, not a break or tremble in the sweet voice. And at last Jack said, "Is that all, dear father?" and, "Yes, I will be sure to remember it—every word."

"Then he came out and kissed me, with almost a smile, and went through the outer door. But an hour afterwards, when I went out to the well, I heard a little choking sound, and saw him lying on his face in the long grass under the apple tree, sobbing his very heart away. So I turned about, and went into the house as softly as I could, and never let him know.

"After it was all over and we had time to look about us, we found some debts left and very little money. It was a hard thing for me, that had for so long a strong, loving arm between me and every care, to have to think and plan how to make ends meet, when I could not even start evenly at the beginning. But Jack came to my help again.

"Father said that you were never to work hard, dear mother, because you were not strong, but that I must take care of you some way. He thought you could let two or three rooms to lodgers, maybe, and that the best thing for me just now would be to get a train-boy's place. He said the men on our road would be sure to give me a chance for his sake."

"I do not know that I had smiled before since his father died; but when I heard him say "our road," in that little proud tone he had, I caught him to my heart, and laughed and cried together.

"And I spoke to Mr. Waters about it only yesterday," he went on; "and he said that Tom Gray is going to leave, and I can have his chance and begin next week, if I like. What do you say, dear mother?"

"O Jack," I said, "how can I get through the long, lonesome days without you? And if anything should happen to you, I should die!"

"Don't, mother!" he said gently, for the tears were in my eyes again. But I would not heed him.

"And you to give up your school!" I cried. "And all our plans for you to come to naught!"

"Father thought of that, too," he answered. "But he said that the whole world belonged to the man that was faithful and true. And I promised him. You can trust me, mother?"

"Trust him? Ah, yes! he had struck the right chord at last, and I lifted my head and dried my tears. Whatever unseen dangers I might fear for my boy would be of the body, not of the soul. "Faithful and true!" I thanked God, and took courage.

"It was wonderful how he succeeded with the books and papers and the other things he sold. There was something in him that made him a favorite with everybody. I have been told by more than one that the sight of his frank, handsome face was like sunshine, and that people bought of him whether they wanted anything or not.

"Well, the years went by and he grew up, working his way from one position to another on the road, trusted everywhere. He was my own boy still, though he was so tall and strong, with his bright curls turned chestnut brown, and a silken fringe shading the lips that kept their old, loving kisses for me alone.

"It was not very long that he had had the place of engineer, which he had wanted so long. He had a day off, and was doing some little things for me about the house and garden, when one of the depot hands came running up the path, calling for him.

"Mr. Harding wants you instantly, Jack!" cried the man. "The

Jersey express should have left the depot five minutes ago, and the engineer has just fallen down in a fit. Curtis and Fitch are both off on leave, and Mr. Harding says there's nobody left but you that he'll trust with the train."

"I!" cried Jack, in a maze. "The Jersey express! And I never drove anything but a freight train!"

"Well, well," cried the man impatiently, "don't stop to argue! Orders is orders, and here's a minute and a half gone already."

"Jack seemed to come to himself at that. He darted one smile at me, and was off like a shot, drawing on his coat as he ran. In less time than I take in telling it I heard the signal of the outgoing train, and knew that my boy was trusted with a task that was used to be given only to the most intelligent and careful men in the service.

"They brought him back to me that night, sir, and laid him on his father's bed; and by piecemeal, then and afterwards, I learned what had happened that day.

"The train starting out so late, they were forced to make up time somewhere on the line. So on that long, straight stretch of track through the valley they were making sixty miles an hour. The train fairly flew. Jack could feel the air strike his face like a sharp wind, though it was a balmy spring night.

(To be continued.)

A B C FOR TEMPERANCE NURSERY.

BY JULIA McNAIR WRIGHT.



U For an Ugly worm which lies Colled in strong drink, they say; And every child the worm that spies Will throw the glass away.

Use no tobacco. Use no wine. Use no bad words. The Bible tells us that wine and strong drink bite like a serpent and sting like an adder.



V For a lovely grape-Vine, With grapes so ripe and sweet; I hope they'll not be turned to wine, They are so good to eat.

Vineyards hung with bunches of grapes are a fine sight. But if these grapes are crushed, and the juice is fermented into wine and put in bottles along a shelf, they are a very sad sight.