

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

"THAT'S THEE, JEM!"

A TRUE AND TOUCHING STORY.

I WAS some few years ago sojourning at a very beautiful and much frequented English watering-place. I met with an earnest Christian tradesman of the town, whose labors in the cause of religion are many and great. Although his occupation was not in selling books, yet he had, in a prominent place in his shop window, an assortment of Bibles, with an illuminated card containing this announcement: "Luther's Sword sold here!" With one of these "swords" that Christian soldier, whom I shall here call by the name of Mr. Carr, fought and won the following battle:

A band or "troupe" of young men with hands and faces blackened, and dressed in very grotesque costumes, arranged themselves before this gentleman's door one day for an exhibition of their peculiar "performances." These people used to be called "Ethiopian Serenaders." After they had sung some comic and some plaintive melodies, with their own peculiar accompaniments of gestures and grimaces, one of the party, a tall and interesting young man, who had the "look" of one who was beneath his proper station, stepped up to the door, tamborine in hand, to ask for a few "dropping pennies" of the people. Mr. Carr, taking one of the Bibles out of his window, addressed the youth:

"See here, young man," he said, "I will give you a shilling and this book besides, if you will read a portion of it among your comrades there, and in the hearing of the bystanders."

"Here's a shilling for an easy job!" he chuckled out to his mates, "I'm going to give you a public reading!"

Mr. Carr opened at the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and pointing to the eleventh verse, requested the young man to commence reading at that verse.

"Now Jem, speak up!" said one of the party, "and earn your shilling like a man!"

And Jem took the Book and read, "And he said, a certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living."

There was something in the voice of the reader, as well as in the strangeness of the circumstances, that lulled all to silence; while an air of seriousness took possession of the youth, and still further commanded the rapt attention of the crowd.

He read on: "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."

"That's thee, Jem!" ejaculated one of his comrades, "it's just like what you told me of yourself and your father!"

The reader continued: "And when he had pent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want."

"Why, that's thee again, Jem!" said the voice. "Go on!"

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have

filled his belly with husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him."

"That's like us all!" said the voice, once more interrupting; "we're all *beggars*, and might be better than we are! Go on; let's hear what came of it."

And the young man read on, and as he read his voice trembled: "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father."

At this point he fairly broke down, and could read no more. All were impressed and moved. The whole reality of the past rose up to view, and in the clear story of the Gospel a ray of hope dawned upon him for his future. His father—his father's house—and his mother's too; and the plenty and the love ever bestowed upon him there; and the hired servants, all having enough, and then *himself* his father's son, and his present state, his companionships, his habits, his sins, his poverty, his outcast condition, his absurdly questionable mode of living—all these came climbing like an invading force of thoughts and reflections into the citadel of his mind, and fairly overcame him.

That day—that scene—proved the turning-point of that young prodigal's life. He sought the advice of the Christian friend who had thus providentially interposed for his deliverance. Communications were made to his parents, which resulted in a long-lost and dearly-beloved child returning to the familiar earthly home; and still better, in his return to his Heavenly Father! He found, as I trust my readers will, how true are the promises of the parable of the "Prodigal Son," both for time and for eternity.

"Yes, there is one who will not chide nor scoff,
But beckons us to homes of heavenly bliss:
Beholds the prodigal a great way off,
And flies to meet him with a father's kiss."

Robert Maguire, M.A., in *British Workman*.

WORDS TO BOYS.

I THINK I would ask permission, if I had happened to be born in a city, to have the opportunity of passing all my vacations in the country, that I might learn the names of trees and flowers and birds. We are, as a people, sadly ignorant of all *accurate* rural knowledge. We guess at many country things, but we are *certain* of very few.

It is inexcusable in a grown-up person, like my amiable neighbour Simpkins, who lives from May to November on a farm of sixty acres in a beautiful wooded country, not to know a maple from a beech, or a bobolink from a cat-bird. He once handed me a bunch of pansies and called them violets, and on another occasion he mistook sweet peas for geraniums.

"What right has a human being, while the air is full of bird-music, to be wholly ignorant of the performer's name? When we go to the opera we are fully posted up with regard to all the principal singers, and why should we know nothing of the owners of voices that far transcend the vocal powers of Jenny Lind and Christine Nilsson?"

A boy ought also to be at home in a barn, and learn how to harness a horse, tinker up a waggon, feed the animals, and do a hundred useful things, the experience of which may be of special service to him in after-life as an ex-

plorer or a traveller, when unlooked-for emergencies befall him. I have seen an Ex-President of the United States, when an old man, descend from his carriage and rearrange buckles and straps about his horses when an accident occurred, while the clumsy coachman stood by in a kind of hopeless inactivity, not knowing the best thing to be done. The Ex-President told me he had learned about such matters on a farm in his boyhood, and so he was never at a loss for remedies on the road when his carriage broke down.

I would keep "better hours," if I were a boy again; that is, I would go to bed earlier than most boys do. Nothing gives more mental and bodily vigour than sound rest when properly applied. Sleep is our great replenisher, and if we neglect to take it regularly in childhood, all the worse for us when we grow up. If we go to bed early, we ripen; if we sit up late, we decay, and sooner or later we contract a disease called *insomnia*, allowing it to be permanently fixed upon us, and then we begin to decay, even in youth. Late hours are shadows from the grave.

If I were a boy again I would practise *perseverance* oftener, and never give a thing up because it was hard or inconvenient to do it. If we want light, we must conquer darkness. When I think of mathematics I blush at the recollection of how often I "caved in" years ago. There is no trait more valuable than a determination to persevere when the right thing is to be accomplished. We are all inclined to give up too easily in trying or unpleasant situations, and the point I would establish with myself, if the choice were again within my grasp, would never be to relinquish my hold on a possible success if mortal strength or brains in my case were adequate to the occasion. That was a capital lesson which Professor Faraday taught one of his students in the lecture-room after some chemical experiments. The lights had been put out in the hall, and by accident some small article dropped on the floor from the Professor's hand. The Professor lingered behind, endeavoring to pick it up, "Never mind," said the student, "it is of no consequence to-night, sir, whether we find it or no." "That is true," replied the Professor; "but it is of grave consequence to me as a principle, that I am not foiled in my *determination* to find it." Perseverance can sometimes equal genius in its results. "There are only two creatures," says the Eastern proverb, "who can surmount the pyramids—the eagle and the snail!"—*Field's Underbrush*.

BOYS AND TOBACCO.

PHYSICIANS are well agreed that the use of tobacco by growing boys is full of danger. Recent investigations—especially in France—have demonstrated that a whole train of nervous diseases are to be traced to this practice. If you want to stop growing, if you want to have a set of nerves that are like those of an invalid old lady, if you wish to grow feeble and thin, if you wish to look sallow and puny—I do not know any better way than to smoke tobacco. It will make a drain on your nervous system which will be sure to tell after a while. Let us hope that if a thousand boys read this, some of them will be saved from forming a filthy habit which most men regret.