

The Children Who Were Blessed.

BY MARGARET E. SANDERSON.

I wonder if ever the children
Who were blessed by the Master of old
Forgot he had made them his treasures,
The dear little lambs of his fold.
I wonder if, angry and wilful,
They wandered and went far astray,
The children whose feet had been guided
So safe and so soon in the way.

One would think that the mothers at
evening,
Soft smoothing the silk-tangled hair,
And low leaning down to the murmur
Of sweet, childish voices in prayer,
Of bade the small pleaders to listen,
If haply again they might hear
The words of the gentle Redeemer,
Borne swift to the reverent ear.

And my heart cannot cherish the fancy
That ever those children went wrong,
And were lost from the peace and the
shelter,
Shut out from the feast and the song;
To the day of gray hairs they remem-
bered,
I think, how the hands that were riven
Were laid on their heads when Christ
uttered.

"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."
He has said it to you, lads and lassies,
Who spell it in God's word to-day;
You, too, may be sorry for sinning,
You also believe and obey;
And 'twill grieve the dear Saviour in
heaven

If one, only one, shall go wrong—
Be lost from the fold and the shelter,
Shut out from the feast and the song.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

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PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1898.

SOME THINGS THE BIBLE FORBIDS.
COVETOUSNESS.

(Ex. 20. 17; Luke 12. 15; Job. 13. 5.)

He that said, "Thou shalt not kill," said also, "Thou shalt not covet." "Be content with such things as ye have," says St. Paul, "for he hath said," that is, God has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Well, if we have God as our companion and friend, certainly we need not envy what anyone else may possess. "So that we may boldly say," continues the Apostle, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Envy and covetousness are among the meanest reptiles that can creep into a man's soul—or boy's, or girl's either. "Beware of covetousness," says our Saviour himself, "for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." If we knew how miserable often those who have great possessions are we would not envy them nor covet their riches. Godliness, with contentment, is great gain, and we may all have both the one and the other of these.

If it is wrong to covet or to envy, then it is right to be glad in the gladness of others, to rejoice with them that do rejoice as well as to weep with them that

weep. This is sometimes not so easy to do. If we are poor and lack many things, and another is rich in possessing all things, it is a very high and generous spirit that rejoices in the prosperity of another. For the boy that loses the prize to congratulate the one who gains it is sometimes hard, but it is glorious. The cultivation of this largeness of spirit is its own exceeding great reward.

IN A MINUTE.

Ethel was out on the long plank wharf when the dinner bell rang. She was feeding the cunning little baby ducks with cracker crumbs.

"I'll go in a minute," she said to herself, as she broke another cracker into tiny pieces, but the baby ducks were hungry, and it was such fun to feed them that Ethel forgot all about her dinner and the big brass dinner bell, just as she had done over so many times before.

She had only one cracker left when Bruno came running down the wharf to see her. The old mother duck spied him as he came bouncing over the planks.

"Quack!" she called, loudly; and what do you think? Every one of those baby ducklings scrambled and scrambled, and into the water they went with a splash.

"Quack!" said the mother duck again, and all the little duckies swam hurriedly "for her and disappeared among the rushes that grew by the edge of the pond.

"Why," exclaimed Ethel, in astonishment, "they didn't wait to gobble another piece. They minded their mother the very first minute she called them."

Very still she stood for a second, thinking; and then she gave her basket to Bruno, and ran quickly up the wharf, across the street, and into the house.

"Late, as usual," said brother Hal, as Ethel came into the dining-room and took her seat at the table. "It's twenty minutes, instead of one, that you waited this noon," he continued, as he glanced up at the clock.

"But it's the last time I'll be late," said Ethel, decidedly, "cause—cause—it is."

And Ethel kept her word. She had learned her lesson, and learned it well; and nobody but the big white mother duck knew who taught it to her.

I'm very sure that she will always keep her secret; but why? She can't tell it; that's all.—Youth's-Companion.

SOWING SEEDS BY THE WAYSIDE.

BY GEO. E. HARTWELL.

Monday, January 10th, the sun came out bright and warm, a beautiful day to begin my journey into the country. About three o'clock we bade farewell to Mrs. Hartwell and the children, and started on foot for the north gate, bound for Pen Hsien. Our party consisted of a coolie, carrying books and bedding, and myself. Eight miles distant there was a large market town. There we would spend the night. Arriving early and finding the place full of people, I took a handful of books and started for an open space. A crowd assembled, and the tracts and calendars began to fly as fast as I could dispose of the cash.

Fortunately for book-sellers in China there is no charge to be handed back, as everybody uses cash. Sixty tracts on the Christian doctrine, and fifty calendars containing portions of the Bible, were sold in a short time. At intervals some one would ask to have the books explained, opening an opportunity to preach. Sometimes these crowds get boisterous and try to make a little sport out of their fair-skinned, blue-eyed visitor. A little patience and firmness, however, will gain the victory, and make friends. Returning to the inn, I had the small boy as an escort. They watched me eat an evening lunch with great interest. A ginger cake to each won their good will. Afterwards an orange was divided between eight boys. This act assured my standing as the boy's friend. A singing-school was then and there established.

The courts of the inn rang with boys' voices. Glow a ping ting, etc., the substitutes for do ra me fah, startled the guests. Then one verse and the chorus of "Jesus loves me," was learned, and a brave attempt made to sing it. This done, the boys asked when I would return. The last thing I heard as they scampered down the courts of the inn was, "Ea su ngaiing waa pu tso,"—"Jesus loves me, this I know,"—music to a musician not harmonious, but to my ear sweet, as it was the harbinger of a grand chorus that will yet resound in this busy market town.

The upper part of the inn court opens into another court occupied by several families. Chinese inns have no stoves,

so the guest must walk to keep up circulation. While thus engaged, two or three elderly women came in from the inner court and said, "Teacher, we want to hear the doctrine, please instruct us." The ice broken, several others standing about gathered around the table, the catechism was opened, and most probably for the first time these old mothers heard the story of God's love to mankind. China contains hundreds of thousands of just such mothers.

Tuesday morning early we started out for a twelve-mile tramp before breakfast. Had a fellow traveller, who listened attentively to the Gospel for about ten minutes. His curiosity then asserted itself, and during a pause for breath he got in a question, namely, if we had any farmers in our country, and, if so, did we grow rice.

The first town had wheelbarrows to hire. Five miles cost three cents, including the barrow man and his barrow. It was not a comfortable ride, sitting astride a barrow without chair or springs in January, but I believe the old country people we met on the way who knew the barrowman will be more ready to listen to the Gospel the next time I pass that way. A horse was hired at the next city for two-thirds of a cent a mile to my destination. Stories once in circulation die hard. For the most part the people are friendly and courteous, yet I was hailed as a rebellion-creator, a man-eater, a child-stealer, a foreign evil spirit, a seller of bean curd, a teacher, a scholar, a saint, on this one short journey.

Thus, if necessary, we are willing to be all things to all men that some may be saved.

Every trip into the country, every book sold, every exhortation on the roadside is preparing the way for His coming. Chentu, China.

AB'S EXPENSIVE LADDER.

BY EUGENIA D. BIGHAM.

Two boys came hastily across the plat of short, thick grass back of Grace church, talking earnestly. They were taking a straight course to a side gate, but suddenly Ab paused and said, "Why, here's a ladder, Amos. Look!" With that he darted back toward the church, while Amos followed, looking hesitatingly at his comrade. Leaning against the church was a strong, light ladder, and Ab's hands were in position for moving it before Amos reached him.

"Come," he said. "We'll see inside that nest in a twinkling. It's an oriole's nest, I am almost sure."

"But we don't know about this ladder, Ab. We have no right to use it."

"Oh, take hold and quit talking. You are forever preaching to me about having no right to do so and so."

Amos put one hand on the ladder, but took it off as he said,

"It's the truth, Ab. We ought not to take it. Some one is using it, else it would not be here."

An angry expression darkened Ab's eyes.

"If you are through with your speech, take hold!" he said. "We will have the ladder back here in ten minutes, and no harm done."

"All right. Only you shoulder the responsibility," Amos said. The next moment the ladder was being borne across the grass plat toward a tall tree growing in Ab's yard. Some of the branches hung over the fence into the church lot, and a bird's nest had been built on one of them. Neither of the boys could rob a bird of her eggs, but each had an overwhelming desire to see into that particular nest. Now, with the aid of the long, light ladder, their wish was fully accomplished. They did see into it, and it was an oriole's nest, the shape and splashes of colour on the eggs being familiar to the boys. They were so interested, indeed, that they forgot how the minutes were passing, and stayed far longer than they had meant.

Soon after the ladder was moved from the church the sexton came from the further side of the belfry and started down the steep roof. He went down backward on a ladder which was hooked to the roof near the base of the steeple. When he reached the end of this ladder he put one foot down, expecting it to touch the first round of the other ladder. Instead, his foot moved about in space.

Cautiously he felt about with his foot. Had the ladder fallen? Surely no one had moved it. The street was a quiet one at the busiest hour of the day, and now, late in the afternoon, it seemed utterly deserted. The sexton had been so absorbed in the work he had been doing that he could not recall having heard any one near the church lot since he first touched the roof. Being in a hurry to get down, and thinking that the ladder had probably slipped just be-

yond reach of his foot, he tried so to twist his body as to look over the edge of the roof.

Possibly his motion was awkward; perhaps he became dizzy. He could never decide how it happened, but just as the two boys came back around the corner of the building with the ladder a man's form came tumbling to the ground. Frightened and anxious, Ab and Amos called for help at the top of their young voices, and soon a crowd of people gathered at the spot.

When kind people were carrying away an old door on which lay the unconscious sexton, Amos turned his white face toward Ab and said:

"You see, now, we had no right to take the ladder. It is every bit your fault, Ab Hallsey! You've no more respect for the rights of others than for so many bits of gravel."

Ab seemed petrified. But he was not; for, when he had gazed at Amos long enough to take in the full meaning of his words, he turned on his heel and walked away. Straight home he went. He entered noiselessly and shut himself in his room. No guilty prisoner ever felt more guilty or more full of foreboding. He believed every word Amos had said, and for the first time in his life he realized that he had a habit of riding rough-shod over the rights of other people.

Ab's father was a man of the strictest justice. He heard the story of the ladder, and, before he would think of going home to supper, he went to see the sexton. When he left the sexton's house he went to see Amos, and, after talking with him, Mr. Hallsey felt that he understood matters.

It was pretty sad at Ab's house that night. Ab cried just as unrestrainedly as if he were nine instead of thirteen years old, and his mother cried with him. Ab's tears were not all on account of what his father said to him, though that hurt him considerably. He was afraid that the sexton would die; he was sorry for his fault, and very sorry that he was not to be allowed to take a certain trip which had been a dream of his, in contemplation, for almost a year. Now his father had put an end to the dream.

It had been Mr. Hallsey's intention to take Ab on a trip to the White Mountain, leaving home the second week of vacation. But now Mr. and Mrs. Hallsey would go, and Ab was to work on a farm in order to earn the money to pay the doctor's bill for the sexton and to pay a man to take the sexton's place until he should get well, if he should recover.

"I deserve it, oh! I know I do; but it is hard, just the same!" Ab said to his mother. And she could not comfort him. The words gave Mr. Hallsey pain, but he wisely thought that his course would result in lasting good to Ab.

When vacation came Ab went to a farm, where he was made to work hard and steadily, boy though he was; and his parents went on their pleasure trip. But everything worked out beautifully. With the money Ab earned during vacation, and during the long hours after school, up to Christmas, he paid the temporary sexton; he paid for every drop of medicine the sexton had, and he paid the doctor. And, to the boy's great joy, the sexton got well after all. Moreover, Ab had lost his disregard for the rights of other people. His father said, "I am proud of you," and his mother said, "You have not a cent of money, my boy, but my heart tells me you are worth your weight in diamonds."

THE TENTH DIME.

"Have your shoes shined?" sung out a small boy near the Union Station, among a group of people just from the train. A young man who heard the cry stayed his steps, hesitating, for he had not much more money in his pocket than he had blacking on his shoes; but to hesitate was to fall into the shoe-black's hands, and the brushes were soon wrestling with splashes of rural clay.

When the shine was completed, the young man handed the boy a dime, and felt that he had marked his way into the great city with an act of charity, for at his heart he did not care how his boots looked; but, as he was pulling himself together for a new start, he saw the boy who had cleaned his boots approach the blind beggar who sits behind the railroad fence and drop a dime into his cup.

"What did you do that for?" asked the young man.

"Yer see," said the boy, "that was me tenth dime terday, an' me teacher at Sunday-school told me I oughter give a tenth of all I make to the Lord. See? An' I guess that ol' blind man wants a dime more than the Lord, so I give it to him. See?—Unknown."