

A Page for Young Folks at Home.

The "Ragged School" Boy.

"Mother," said a dying boy, "will you give up drinking?"

"Mother," he said, and his voice was very weak and broken--yet how great was its power to awaken the mother's sleeping conscience!--"Mother, will you give up drinking, and go to the house of God, and pray for a new heart? Mother, I want to meet you in heaven."

"Father, I shall soon leave you, but I am going to my heavenly Father. Will you give up swearing, father, and read the bible, and go to a place of worship on Sunday, and seek a new heart? Then I shall meet you in heaven. Do, father."

"A little boy, whom we will call Henry, had been for some time in the school. He had a sad, wretched home. His parents were drunkards; almost all the money they could obtain was spent upon themselves in the gin-shop; and their poor children had scarcely even rags to cover them; and often were obliged to pass a whole day without food. It is terrible to think how much those children must have suffered, and how cruelly they had been driven to sly pilfering or daring thievery, by the wicked neglect of their besotted father and mother. When Henry was admitted into the school, one of his brothers had been transported as a thief; and another, younger than himself, was in prison for having stolen to keep himself from starvation.

"I have said that Henry's home was a wretched one; let me describe it:--There was but one room for the whole family, which had to serve as a sleeping room at night, as well as a living room by day. In one corner of the dirty, unswept floor, was a scanty heap of shavings for a bed; upon which they all huddled themselves together for rest--without blanket, rug, or even rags, to cover them from the cold air. On the mantelshelf were two cups; and by the fire-grate, in which was seldom to be seen a handful of burning coals, was an old tin kettle without a lid. Chairs there were none, nor a table, nor a cupboard for food. Alas! seldom would such a convenience have been of use, for even a day's supply of dry bread alone was seldom there.

"Though Henry had such a home, and such depraved parents, he was far from being a dull, stupid, obstinate, discontented, or badly disposed child. He seemed to have been preserved, in a great measure, from the contagion of wickedness by which he was surrounded; and after he had been a little time at the Ragged School, none of his school-fellows were more cheerful, diligent, and well-behaved; while out of school he was quite the life of his playmates, on account of his good tempered and happy disposition. It would have been a sad thing if such a boy had been driven by want and cruelty to the commission of crime. Surely it was the sovereign mercy of God that led him to the ragged school, and there provided him with friends who were better to him than his own neglectful parents.

"It was a pleasure to see little Henry enter the school every day, with a cheerful step, and clean face and hands. It was a good trait of his character that he cared at all about cleanliness, for we may be sure he did not learn it of a mother who cared for little else beside her own wicked indulgence, and who was far more fond of the gin-shop than of her own room. Indeed, it was not without some trouble that Henry could keep himself clean, for he had neither soap, towel, nor bowl to use. But where there is a will, there is generally a way; and after rising from his bed of shavings, the boy used to take an old rag into the back yard of the house, and well wash himself with water from a but which stood in the corner. After all, however, poor Henry was a pitiable object. His clothes were deplorably old and ragged, and he had neither shoes nor stockings to his feet.

"Henry's cheerfulness and perseverance gained the good will of his teachers, who gave him, as a reward for his conduct, a pair of shoes and stockings--the first he ever remembered to have had. It was very cold weather; the

snow lay thick on the ground; and the poor boy was overjoyed with the present. The next day, however, he came to school barefooted as usual, carrying the shoes and stockings in his hand.

"How is this?" said his teacher.

"Oh, sir," he replied, "you see my feet are all over chilblains; I could not bear the shoes on, they hurt me so much,--but I would not leave them at home, for if I had, I should not have seen them again. My mother would part with them to get money for drink. You know, sir, my mother would have drunk me before now, if she could."

Now I am willing to hope these are extreme cases, or, at any rate, that there are not many parents of Sunday scholars so lost to every kind and tender feeling as these parents appear to have been. And I am quite unwilling to believe that the homes of many of our Sunday scholars present such a scene of unmitigated wretchedness as did that of poor little Henry, the Ragged School boy. But, while hoping thus much, I will not pretend ignorance that a very great deal of sad intemperance is witnessed in some of those homes, and that many lamentable consequences result from it, both to our scholars and to their parents. Ah! by how many a Sunday-school girl or boy might the pathetic and earnest appeal be spoken, "Mother--Father--will you give up drinking!"

The Manchineel.

In the West Indies a certain tree is found, called the Manchineel. A beautiful tree it is, with foliage green and glossy. Its flower, too, is beautiful, and its fruit a golden yellow apple, tempting to the eye and fragrant to the smell. But for all this it contains in its juices a most mortal poison. If eaten it produces death. If its sap fall upon the skin, it raises sores and blisters, painful and dangerous. The Indians used to dip their arrows in its juice to poison their enemies in battle.

A very bad tree is the Manchineel, you will say; why did God make such a tree to endanger the lives of his creatures; why did he infuse such an evil element into its pretty leaf, and flower, and fruit.

We don't know children, why God saw fit to make such a poison-tree; but some things that are fatally poisonous to one order of animals, are quite harmless to another. This we certainly know, that if men would let the manchineel alone it would never injure them.

Thus it is, dear children, with a thousand evils, moral poisons in the world. Let them alone, and they will do you no harm.

But this is not quite all about the manchineel: you will be able to see that God, instead of wishing to harm his creatures, is studious to provide for their safety and protection. In the near neighbourhood of this poison tree is found growing the white-wood or fig-tree, the juice of either of which, if seasonably applied, is a complete remedy.

And in like manner has the 'Lord our Maker' provided a sovereign antidote for the poisonous influences of sin. Sin is a poison-tree with wide-spreading branches, green foliage, and tempting fruit. Its sap is far more deadly than the manchineel's, for that only affects the body, while sin destroys the soul. The antidote is found in the precious leaves which grow 'for the healing of the nations'--the Bible leaves. Then, children, will you not all love not only to apply these leaves to cure the poison in your own souls, but to aid in the good work of planting this healing tree all over the earth, that all flesh may have access to its blessings?--*Child's Paper.*

AFFECTION, like spring flowers, breaks through the most frozen ground at last; and the heart that seeks but for another heart to make it happy, will never seek in vain.

A MAN putting aside his religion because he is going into society, resembles a person taking off his shoes because he is about to walk on thorns.