

BOYS AND GIRLS

Our Sunday-School Treat.

(The 'Rev. Carruthers Ray,' M.A., in 'Home Words.')

My first Sunday-school Treat—the very thought of the misery I underwent in connection with it still makes me shiver with dread. I was a young curate then, hopelessly ignorant of the 'rampageous ways of small fry,' since I had never had small brothers or sisters to keep in order, and (I confess it with shame) my pet aversion was a baby, or any child still at a too tender age. I was always afraid that something would happen to them, and that I should be held responsible should I not render first aid.

Strangely enough, when I went to the parish of 'Knebworth' (a fictitious name), the very first duty that was laid on my inexperienced shoulders was the superintending of a school treat at the seaside. My Vicar had fully intended to do the work himself, but a sudden attack of illness forced him to depend upon me to take his place.

'I am sorry there are very few teachers who can accompany the children,' he said to me before we started, 'but several kind friends have come forward to offer their services, and I am sure you will manage famously. I wish I were able to come with you.'

He must have noted the fervor with which I said 'I wish you were, too.'

We made an excellent start, with plenty of cheering and whistling from the railway-carriage windows. There were seventy-three of us all told. I insisted upon counting everybody, big and little, just as my mother counts the packages, parcels and portmanteaus which make up her luggage. How I hoped that I could be as happy as she is in not losing any of her belongings. Anyhow I determined it should not be for lack of putting her plan into practice. I would count the children at least three times during the day.

After a journey lasting an hour and a half—a very lively journey for me, by the way, in that I was in a constant state of alarm lest Bobby or Katie or Jane should fall out of the carriage windows—we arrived at our destination, the little town of Sandbay. First of all we marched straight (or rather I should say in the most straggling fashion) to the restaurant where we were to have lunch some three hours later. I thought I would get the children to leave anything they did not want in the way of wraps at the meeting-place, at the same time taking the opportunity to impress upon them the precise address, in case any one should get lost.

They were just about to distribute in small parties under the charge of my helpers, when something—perhaps the recollection of my mother's punctilious care of her luggage—prompted me to re-count the children as they left the restaurant. We were only seventy-two! For the moment I tried to be calm.

'Stop!' I called. 'There is already one child missing. Which of the teachers has less than twenty children?' (I had divided them up in companies of a score each, reserving twelve for myself.)

To my dismay it was discovered that my own company was one short. A search in the restaurant proved fruitless: a small boy of seven was not to be found. I think I may claim to have done the right thing. My eleven children I divided among the other companies, and myself set off to try to track the lost boy.

Before long the whole available police force of the tiny town was more or less at my disposal, and I believe if I had suggested it we should have tried dragging the sea, so willing

were the men to help me. High and low we looked, but with no result. My one hope was that when we met at lunch the truant would be forthcoming. Lunch time came: also the whole party, less one child!

You can imagine my feelings. I had failed dismally at the very first trial. After lunch I decided that despite the disgrace I must telegraph to the Vicar, telling him what had happened. 'You might put in that inquiries should be made at Billy's home,' suggested one of the teachers. If I had known the value of the hint I would have hugged that man.

We wired and waited. In an hour the reply came, 'Billy Jones returned home ten o'clock quite safe.'

I do not think any telegram I have received has brought me such relief. All my mental pictures of the mangled remains of little Billy, being found on the line, or his body washed up by the sea, vanished in a twinkling, and I was myself again. I need not add how thoroughly we enjoyed the afternoon.

But about Billy. On our return we learnt that the little scamp had been so enraptured with the joys of the railway train that he had decided that the pleasure he knew was to be preferred to the pleasure he did not know. He therefore climbed back into the railway carriage and hid himself under the seat till the train started, happily homewards, Sandbay being the terminus. Once fairly going, out he came from his hiding-place and leaned out of the window to his heart's content to 'watch the wheels go round.' I still tremble to think what might have happened.

At the first station at which the train stopped, some twenty miles down the line, he was asked for his ticket. Then came the deluge—of tears—for he had none.

A few questions elicited 'where he came from,' and home he was despatched in charge of a kindly guard.

Since that eventful 'treat!' I have had many amusing experiences, but none tragic. I have learnt that the best way of assuring the safety of children is to trust them very largely to each other's keeping. 'Now, Tommy,' I say to one of the elder lads, 'I'm going to depend upon you to take care of Benny,' and (such is human nature!) Tommy is proud of his responsibility, and not only keeps Benny, but himself out of mischief.

Perhaps my funniest experience was the rigging out a dozen boys in dry clothes, hired from a pawnbroker's shop—my first and I hope my last visit to 'Uncle.' The young monkeys had raced some big seas round a point and been soaked to the skin! It was only a bare hour after our arrival, and for the rest of the day the smallest lad of all marched proudly about the fashionable pleasure resort in a pair of flannels three or four sizes too large for him. He evidently thought himself a man, rigged out as he was in trousers that would have fitted his father.

Saving.

More than five hundred persons competed for the prizes lately offered by a Chicago trust company for the best thoughts on the subject of saving. The man who received the first prize wrote: 'Saving produces a peace of mind unknown to him who in time of misfortune must depend on the bounty of his friends. Determine to save, for will-power is the prime essential. Deposit regularly. Lay aside some portion of each week's or month's income. Deposit extra and unexpected receipts.' It is a short but sound and comprehensive sermon on thrift, and enlists in a good cause two forces that sometimes fight on opposite sides: will-power and habit.—'Youth's Companion.'

Our Minister's Text.

(Aunt Carrie, in 'Christian Intelligencer.')

We were on our way to Philadelphia, father and I. Not seated in a comfortable steam car, drawn by a swift moving engine, for our community boasted no such convenience at the time of which I am writing, forty years ago. But seated in a market waggon drawn by a pair of slow moving farm horses. Still, the twenty-mile ride was never dreaded by a young girl on her way to the city to do her spring shopping.

We had risen early while it was yet dark, breakfasted and started with our marketing. How weird and strange even familiar objects looked at that unseemly hour. I leaned my head against father's shoulder and dozed, the first few miles of the way. Then day began to dawn, and father said here we are at the county line. That is Mr. DuBoise's place and there is Abram going to the barn now. They were our church people. We spoke of their long drive to church, and then the conversation drifted into church affairs and our dear old pastor, domine as father called him. And of his sermon the previous Sabbath. His text was from Malachi, 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.' His sermon brought out the fact that the Israelites were supposed to render one-tenth of their products to the Lord. And if they with their meagre light, and the Saviour still unborn, and but a dim comprehension of his glorious kingdom gave thus, should not the Christians of to-day, who knew so well of the birth, life and death of Jesus, and felt their sins forgiven for his sake, give at least one-tenth? Far rather more than less to spread his kingdom, so much greater were their privileges.

I had been deeply impressed by the sermon. Do you suppose you give one-tenth? Wouldn't it be fine to begin to do so? Father smiled and said, 'Why don't you begin? You might try it to-day, you have your own shopping money to spend as you please.' 'Oh, father,' I exclaimed, 'I am two dollars short of what I want now; give me five dollars more, then I could do it nicely.' I had made a memorandum of my wants, and had a pretty accurate idea of their cost.

'Why, child,' said father, 'if I gave you five dollars more and you devoted three to the cause that would be my gift not yours. You would exercise no self-denial at all.'

'But please do, father.'

'Oh, no, Caroline.'

Now, when father's pleasant Caddie gave place to a stern Caroline, it was useless to urge.

Conversation drifted into other channels, we met children going to school and heard the bells cheerily calling them in. Father pointed out changes that had been made since last I had been down with him. At last we reached the city. And while father disposed of his produce I was to do my shopping and meet him at his hotel for our homeward drive by the middle of the afternoon.

I went into a restaurant to lunch after my long drive. I took out my memorandum to consider and dispose of the tithing thoughts. It seemed so impossible to dispense with any article that I truly wished that text had not come up for consideration, but it had, and I could not down it. Then that verse in Malachi preceding our next text came into my