

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

THE WONDERFUL MOTHER.

THE winter of the year 1709 was one of extreme cold. Never was a colder winter known in Europe. In France many people froze to death in their beds, not only among the mountains, but even in the villages and cities. The hottest fire was not sufficient to keep a room warm.

Sparrows and crows and jackdaws sometimes fell down dead while flying in the air. Large flocks of sheep and cattle froze in the barnyards.

During this winter a poor little Savoyard boy was wandering the streets of Luneville, in Lothringin. He was an orphan. His older brother, who had taken care of him, was frozen to death.

The little Savoyard boy wandered about from house to house, to get a little employment or a piece of bread. He was glad to blacken boots or shoes, dust clothes, clean dishes in the kitchen, or do anything that would give him a sou. But when night came on, his suffering became intense. He had slept with his brother in a carpenter's shop, where the two had covered themselves with on old foot-cloth, on which they piled shavings very high. But now he was alone, and would certainly freeze in the carpenter's shop. The wife of a hostler took compassion on him. She shewed him a little sleeping place in one of the stalls in the stable where the horses of a certain prince were kept. In this stall there stood an iron cage, in which a large brown bear was confined, for the beast was very wild and angry. The boy lay down upon some straw, and stretched out his hand to pull more. As he stretched out his hand, he put it in between the wires of the cage in which the beast was, and found that a large pile was there. Thinking it was better to get in where the straw was, he crawled up to the bars. The bear grumbled a little, but did no violence. The boy offered a prayer which his mother taught him, and then committed himself to the keeping of his heavenly Father.

The bear took the little stranger between her paws and pressed him near her warm breast, and against her thick skin, so soft and so comfortably, that he who had not slept for many nights with any comfort, now forgot all fear, and soon fell into a sweet, deep sleep.

In the morning the boy waked up with renewed strength, and crept out of the cage. At night he returned to his strange mother. Beside the bear, there lay a great many pieces of bread which had been brought from the table of the prince, but the bear had eaten all she wanted and these were left. So the little Savoyard helped himself to all he needed. He then lay quietly down between the paws of his thick clad mother, who pressed him to her as she had done before, and he slept there as in the warmest feather-bed.

In this way he slept five nights without anybody knowing it. On the morning of the sixth night he overslept himself, so that when the hostlers went around with lanterns in early morning to attend the many horses in

the stable, they saw the boy lying between the paws of the great bear. The old bear grunted a little, as if she was very much offended at any one seeing her taking care of her little favourite. The boy sprang up and squeezed through the cage, to the great astonishment of the bystanders.

This strange affair became widely known, and created much wonder throughout the city. Although the modest Savoyard was very much ashamed that anybody should know that he had slept in the arms of a bear, he was ordered to appear in the presence of the prince, to whom he told his recent experience. The prince appointed a day for him to come again. The boy came, and in the presence of the prince and princess, and many people of rank, he was requested to enter the cage where the great bear was. She received him as kindly as ever, and pressed him to her breast.

The good prince now understood that the bear, or rather God, working providentially through the bear, had been the means of saving the poor little orphan boy from death. No person had taken care of him, none had shewn any sympathy for him, and yet, in the very coldest night of that remarkable winter, this rough bear was the means of saving his life, the providence of God preserving him.

This circumstance led the prince, and it should lead us, to remember that God sometimes uses the most unexpected means as the instruments for the consummation of his purposes. The little Savoyard afterward led an honourable and useful life, nor did he ever forget how God had spared him in his great need.

"The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear."—1 Sam. xvii. 37.

"I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me."—Psalm iii. 5.

A GHOST STORY.

IF we only learn to fear God in the right way, we should learn at the same time never to fear anything else. Those who fear God properly are the bravest people in the world. The Bible tells us that "the wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion."

Let me tell how a little girl once got over a great fright just by fearing God and having right thoughts about Him. She went to pay a visit to her aunt in the country. While there she had to sleep in a room by herself; this was not pleasant to her, for at home she always slept with her sister.

One night during this visit she awoke suddenly and saw something white at the foot of her bed. Its head—which she thought she saw as plainly as could be—was turned a little to one side, and was looking at her. She said to herself, "It is a ghost; I am sure it is;" and she pulled the bedclothes over her head. Presently she said to herself, "Well, what if there is a ghost here? Is not God here, too? and does not the Bible say that nothing can harm those who trust in Him?" Then she tried to put her trust in God. This gave her courage, and she resolved to take another look at the white thing. It did look

very much like a living thing of some kind. "Well, if it is," she thought to herself, "I'll speak to it;" and she cried out, "Who's there?" The figure did not stir or answer; there it stood as still and white as ever.

"My father says there are no ghosts," she said to herself; "and if there are, what harm is it likely they want to do me? I'll just put my trust in God, and He can take care of me." This thought gave her courage and made her feel more comfortable. Still, there stood the figure.

"I'll know who and what you are," said the little girl. "Mother says frights are worse in people's fancies than anywhere else."

Then she jumped out of her bed and went straight up to the figure. How many children would have done that? I am afraid some grown people would hardly have had the courage to do this. But this dear child walked straight up to it. And what do you suppose it proved to be? Why, it was only the moonlight shining through the curtains on the wall.

"How much it did look like a head, with eyes and nose and mouth!" she said, and then she jumped into bed again. For a while she lay and looked at it. But it only looked like moonshine now, and no ghost, and she wondered how she could have been so deceived. And that, I dare say, is as much as ghosts ever are—only moonshine. She kept her eye on the soft silver light till she fell into a sweet sleep again.

THE FIRST WRONG BUTTON.

"DEAR me!" said little Janet, "I buttoned just one button wrong, and that made all the rest go wrong;" and Janet tugged away and fretted, as if the poor buttons were quite at fault for her trouble.

"Patience! patience!" said mamma, smiling at the little fretful face, "and next time look out for the first wrong button; then you'll keep all the rest right. And," added mamma, as the last button was put in its place and the scowling face was smooth once more, "look out for the first wrong deed of any kind; another and another are sure to follow."

Janet remembered how, one day not long ago, she struck baby Alice; that was the first wrong deed. Then she denied having done it; that was another. Then she was unhappy and cross all day because she had told a lie. What a long list of buttons fastened wrong just because one went wrong—because her naughty little hand struck baby! The best thing she could do to make it right again was to tell mamma how naughty she had been, and ask her to forgive her; but that was much harder than just to do the buttons again.

Janet thought it all over, and between the buttons and her very unhappy day I think she learned never again to forget to look out for the first wrong deed.

Boys, remember, you grow old every day, and if you have bad habits, they grow old too, and the older both get, the harder you are to separate.