

A QUEER BOY.

He doesn't like to study, it "weakens his eyes,"
But the "right sort" of book will insure a sur-
prise.

Let it be about Indians, pirates, or bears,
And he's lost for the day for all mundane affairs;
By sunlight or gaslight his vision is clear.

Now, isn't that queer?

At thought of an errand, he's "tired as a hound,"
Very weary of life, and of "tramping around."
But if there's a band, or a circus in sight,
He will follow it gladly from morning till night.
The showman will capture him, some day, I fear.
For he is so queer.

If there's work in the garden, his head "aches to
split,"

And his back is so lame that he "can't dig a bit."
But mention base-ball, and he's cured very soon,
And he'll dig for a woodchuck the whole after-
noon.

Do you think he "plays 'possum?" He seems
quite sincere;

But—*isn't* he queer?

—W. H. S., in St. Nicholas.

BREAKFAST FOR TWO.

(By *Jouanna H. Matthews.*)

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

"I went down to Sixteenth street, as Jack bid me, an' I tells the old woman what was fendin' shop what I was wantin', an' she shows me the shirts, an' I picks out one for a dollar, 'cause Jack he told me, 'Don't yer give no more nor that,' an' I give her the tenner. An' she warn't no ways smart, that ole gal, she warn't. She gives me the shirt all tidy rolled up in paper an' string, like as I was a high-flyer customer, an' I tucks it under my arm; an' then she pulls out her money drawer an' goes to make change for me, an' she counts it out, nine dollars, an' all the time the ten a-lyin' out jest handy, for she hadn't a took it up yet. An' I couldn't stan' it nohow—'twas as asy, as winkin'. I picked up the nine that was comin' to me, and I says, says I, a-pointin' up behind her, 'Massy on us! there's smoke a-bustin' out back o' yer! Yer on fire, as sure as yer livin'!' An' she was so scairt she turned roun' to look, an' the minit her eyes was off me, I jest made a grab at the ten, an' out the shop, an' cut sticks down street like sixty!"

Bill listened with eyes and ears and open mouth, but marvelling less at the iniquity of the deed than at its daring and success.

"An' yer got clear off?" he questioned, his wonder, truth to tell, not unmixed with admiration, which was quite evident to Jim,

"Didn't I, though?" returned Jim, now chuckling over the recollection. "I did hear the hollers of her afore I was up to the corner; screeched fit to raise the roof off her head, she did; but I was roun' the corner, an' down Sixt avenue an' out of sight 'fore she could get a M. P. to send after me!"

"You was in luck," said Bill.

"Now," said Jim, his newly-awakened conscience once more asserting its claims to be heard, "now, Bill, ain't that awfuller nor anythin' you ever done!"

"Well, yes!" answered Bill, numberless small thefts and purloinings presenting themselves to his remembrance, "it was Jim; but yer see, I never got the chance at anythin' so big. 'Taint to say, maybe I wouldn't ha' done it if I had. I guess I warn't no better nor you, ole feller, afore Miss Milly got hold on us, an' brought us up straight outer them bad ways!"

This encouragingly, and with a friendly pat upon Jim's shoulder, as who should say that he was by no means ashamed of him in spite of the "bigness" of past transgressions.

"Well, it don't feel good to think on, anyhow," said Jim, "an' I do wish I could get doin' a make-up for it. What could a feller do? Couldn't you strike an idea?"

"Nothin' as I knows on, till yer git that fortin yer allers reckonin' on," answered this friend and sympathizer. "That's a whole heap for yer to save up, Jim, an' I don't see how yer goin' to do it this ever so long. Why! it's an awful lot!"

"How much is it, anyhow?" asked Jim, thoughtfully. "I never kin seem to make out how much I oughter make up. There was the shirt an' the nine dollars what Jack had—he never suspicioned nothin' wrong, an' I never let on nothin' 'bout it—an' the ten dollar what I had; but all on it wasn't the ole shop-woman's. So how much she too a-had? You oughter know better nor

me, bein' you're down to the boss' office, an' larnin' figgers."

But this arithmetical puzzle went beyond Bill's knowledge of "figgers," and he shook his head hopelessly as he answered his equally perplexed companion.

"It's awful kind of mixed up," he said, "an' I ain't never been set to do sums like that. Jim, if I was you, do you know what I'd do?"

"What?" asked Jim, eagerly, hoping that the other had arrived at some feasible solution of his difficulties.

"Tell Miss Milly right straight off," said Bill, looking the other full in the eyes, as if expecting objections to be raised, but quite ready to combat them if need were.

"An' git turned out?" said Jim.

"No; get hung onto tighter nor ever, like the feller what cut down the cherry-tree, and gits the sojers turnout on his birthday along of that, 'cause he tole on hisself. Washington, yer know, him what got to be president; an' folks is always talkin' so fine about him as he was such great shakes. Folks set a heap more by yer if yer tell when yer've done a mean thing; an' cuttin' down of cherry trees ain't nothin' alongside of what yer done."

"But folks don't think more on yer accordin' as you've done wuss," said poor Jim.

"No; but the wuss yer done the wuss you've got to tell, an' Miss Milly, she knows that, an' she's awful good, yer know, an' is never hard on folks. There's that ole naggin' Mary Jane, allers a tellin' on us if we go to have a bit of fun, an' Miss Milly she never makes no fuss, but jest sets the ole one down in her purty, quiet way, an' most times don't say nothin' to us. Now yer try it; tell Miss Milly, an' see if she don't find a way ter help yer out of this. 'Taint no harm done even if she can't."

Jim pondered this advice, and to some purpose; for soon after we were settled in our city home he came to Milly, and, taking her into his confidence, made confession of "the awfulest thing he had ever done."

What Milly said to him, and what fruit her counsels and his own remorse brought forth will be seen hereafter.

CHAPTER XI.—JIM'S MAKE-UP.

It was Thanksgiving Day, and Bill was nominally employing the morning of the holiday in assisting his friend and chum to complete his allotted daily duties, so that they might both have the after part of the day for their own diversion. He had undertaken to run upon some errands, while Jim within door was blacking boots, whistling merrily, as usual when engaged in any sedentary occupation of the like nature, and thereby exasperating the soul of Mary Jane, who continually declared that the "music doin's of them two b'ys made her that nairvous that she was fit to go crazy!" And I am forced to confess that the nearer they were to the old cook, the more forcible and continual were the "music doin's" of our two young servitors. It was impossible for their most enthusiastic friends and defenders to deny that they took a calm delight in aggravating her whenever opportunity presented itself. Nevertheless, they were always ready to do her "a good turn," or to lend her a helping hand; and no feelings either of aversion or delicacy ever prevented her from calling upon them for assistance whenever she desired it. On this particular morning, not falling in at all with the spirit of the day, she had been vexed beyond measure because the boys were to have a whole holiday after the morning chores were done, and had set her wits to work to devise ways and means whereby she might detain and hinder them. But they had good-naturedly complied with all her demands upon their time, being themselves too happy at the prospect before them of a whole afternoon in the Park, seeing the animals, rowing and so forth, to resent her exactions otherwise than by a little chaffing.

"I don't mind yer, yer know," said Jim, when she had called him from his legitimate work quite unnecessarily, for about the tenth time, "cause I'm so sorry for yer."

Mary Jane sniffed, but did not ask the cause of his sympathy, knowing full well that she would be apt to bring forth some shot at her most vulnerable point, her age, if she did so.

But Jim was not to be balked of his small revenge.

"Yer see yer don't never have no good times along of her bein' stiff and old, an' havin' no teeth—leastways on'y a few—an' not seein' very well. I say, Mary Jane, I think those specs I see you a-wearin' of t'other night is awful becomin' to yer—makes yer look quite young again; so that's the reason me an' Bill don't mind yer innercent tantrums, but tries to cheer yer up with our singin' an' whistlin'."

With which he thrust his hand into a boot, and, resuming his interrupted labors, began to brush and whistle with renewed energy.

But again these labors were brought to an end, as the basement door was suddenly opened, and a familiar curly head thrust within. And thus spake the tongue appertaining to said head:

"Cats, Jim!"

At this thrilling announcement, boot and blacking-brush were dropped instantly; and, deaf to the calls of Mary Jane, Jim had followed the head, which had been immediately withdrawn, shutting the door after him as he disappeared, with a bang that shook the house to its foundations.

This magic word, "Cats!" had power to divert our young heroes from any occupation or pastime; and, once absorbed in the exciting pleasures of the chase, all thought of anything else was given to the winds for the time being.

On this occasion Bill, returning from his errand, had seen three cats reposing peacefully upon our balcony, and lost no time in informing Jim of the proximity of the game, whose slumbers were speedily brought to an end by the frantic onslaught upon them which ensued.

Thereupon the hunted, scattering, took their pursuers in different directions; and they lost sight of each other, it seemed.

Bill was the first to return, flushed, excited and triumphant, having succeeded in toppling one unfortunate feline head-foremost into a neighboring yard, and in running another to the earth beneath a pile of lumber in an adjacent side street, whence she saluted him with such defiance and sarcasm as befitted her nature and the situation. The excitement of the chase, however, was all that the boys cared for; their cruel intentions extending no farther than the terrifying of these their natural enemies; and, having succeeded thoroughly in doing this, Bill was more than content as he came back to learn if Jim had covered himself with like glory.

Jim was not there when he reached the house; but as Bill stood in the area, awaiting the return of his comrade, he rushed around the corner, and burst upon him in a state of excitement and exultation beyond the power of words to describe. It was no cat, however, which wrought him up thus; more rare and unlooked for game than poor Puss having attracted his attention and fallen into his hands.

"Look a-her what I found!" was his salutation, and he held out a ring which he said he had picked up in the street running to the north of the square upon which our house fronted.

"The cat had just scooted up a tree, an' I was jest puttin' for her, thinkin' nothin' partic'lar," he said, "when my foot hit agin somethin' what rolled; but I shouldn't a-taken no notice, on'y I seen somethin' shinin' as the sun fell enter it, an' I looked an' seen this, an' I picked it up. I didn't think no more on cats, you can bet!"

It was a cameo, a figure of Hebe, most exquisitely and delicately cut upon a pale green ground, and heavily set in gold; but of course its true beauty and value were by no means appreciated by our young heroes. Still, they both could see that the jewel was a pretty thing, and Jim was radiant over his prize. It was carried in and displayed to the servants, who crowded about Jim the moment the affair got wind; and was duly admired by all, save Mary Jane, who of course considered herself bound to depreciate everything done, said or owned by these two boys.

Still she could not repress some curiosity respecting "Jim's find," and came about him with the rest to examine it.

"Let's try it," she said, stretching out a gaunt, skinny forefinger, hardened by toil, and upon which such a gem would indeed have looked strangely incongruous.

"Ain't yer good!" exclaimed Jim, indignantly. "No yer don't, neither! Wouldn't go on your finger more nor a nail's length, ole lady."

"Pooh! I don't care. It's a haythen, ondacent, outlandish thing, anyhow; and I never did take no stock in naked figgers," said Mary Jane, scornfully. "But you don't think you'll be let to keep it, youngster?"

"Ain't a-goin' ter," said Jim, too much delighted with his treasure to retort with his usual impudence at the slightest provocation from the ill-tempered old woman.

"What yer goin' to do with it?" asked Bill, still gazing admiringly upon the prize.

"Sell it?"

"Sell it? no! I'm a-goin to give it ter Miss Milly for her Krismas present. You give her a birthday present, Bill, an' I'll give her a Krismas one; an' I guess she won't have no bigger Krismas box from none of her own folks nor this. Ain't it a swell thing, though, an' wasn't I in luck to find it?"

"You won't be let to keep it," repeated Mary Jane, with a calm satisfaction in her tones.

"No; the one what's lost it will advertise it, most likely," said one of the other servants.

"They won't get it if they do," said Jim, defiantly. "It's a-goin' to be for Miss Milly, an' yer ain't, none on yer, to tell her."

Jim's notions of the rights of property were still somewhat vague and unsettled. He would not now have taken the ring, had it still been in the owner's possession; but since he had found it, he considered himself to have a just claim upon it, and had not the least idea that he was infringing upon the laws of *meum and tuum*.

But his secret did not long remain a secret—too many of the household already shared it; and I am sorry to say that Mary Jane took a malicious pleasure in going at once and reporting it at headquarters.

Mother and Milly both received the news with a calmness and absence of comment which incensed the old servant, and moved her to farther remark:

"Ye's never goin' to let him kape it, Miss Milly?" she said, lingering with her hand upon the latch of the door.

Milly's patience was nearly at an end with Mary Jane's constant attacks upon her proteges.

"That need not trouble you, Mary Jane; I can manage the boy," she answered, with a quiet and chilling dignity, which would have extinguished at once anyone less viciously disposed than our cook.

"Manage the b'y, is it, Miss Milly?" said the spoiled old woman; "the managin' is the other way, I'm thinkin'; and bless yer poor heart, ye'll niver make gentlemen out of them two b'ys. My heart is broke with 'em intirely, slammin' of doors, and chatterin' roun' chiny, an' whistlin' an' singin' the ruff off my head—it's a bad thing you're doin', trainin' 'em up such music ways, an' all come to no good—an' all the thousand provokin' ways of 'em. 'Twould take more nor Job hisself to stan' 'em, more partic'larly this one; for the other's away part of the time, an' the peacock ways he takes on hisself, too, along of bein' into Mr. Edward's office! Set him up indeed! No, no, you an' Mr. Edward'll niver make gentlemen out of them b'ys!"

"We may make Christians and honest men of them, at least, Mary Jane," said Milly, when this long and impertinent harangue came to an end.

Mary Jane would have entered her protest against even this possibility, but mother cut it short with: "That will do, Mary Jane," and the tone saying that no more would be tolerated, the old woman departed, grumbling.

We discussed the matter among ourselves; but not a word about the ring was said to the boy by Milly or any other one of the family; none of the servants, save Mary Jane, reported its finding; and he had made no disclosures up to the next morning at breakfast time.

Under Thomas' supervision and training, he was really becoming quite apt as a table-servant, although he did exhibit startling eccentricities, now and then, in his style of waiting; and he was acting in that capacity as usual on that occasion.

"Any special news this morning, Ned?" said father, whose eyes had been troubling him of late, so that he had been obliged to depend upon others to keep him up in the news and literature of the day.

(To be Continued.)