

### THE BLIGHTED PEAR TREE.

A NEW master had come to the national school at Battletown.

Like many new brooms, he was inclined to sweep very clean. Reformations here, reformations there, were the order of the day; new regulations, new punishments, new rewards followed in quick succession, till the pupils hardly knew what they might not do.

One or two privileges had been taken away too, and although something else had been given in exchange the children were naturally on the alert, fearing that something they particularly valued might go next.

In the school yard there stood a pear tree, which had for some time been gradually fading, until now it looked all but dead. This tree had always been a great favorite with the children, for it had born plenty of fruit in former days, and also afforded a pleasant shelter from the summer sun.

So, with childlike spirit they clung to the hope that next year it would be all bright and green again, and would not even own to themselves that it was dying.

Their consternation then was great when one day the new master was overheard telling his assistant it must be cut down.

"Mind the gardener does it to-morrow. It is only taking up the ground and is very unsightly."

Forthwith a bright little boy came forward with hand outstretched for permission to speak.

"What is it, Jack?" asked the master.

"Please sir, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it."

A burst of applause came from all the children, while Jack, quite frightened at his own boldness, collapsed into his place again.

"Very well," said the school-master, kindly; you have given good advice Jack, and I'm glad to see you know your Bible so well. I will tell the gardener to do it to-morrow."

On "digging about it," they found that the roots had grown down into a layer of brick-bats and stones, so that they could get no nourishment, and were sadly cramped for space, not to mention also numerous loathsome insects which were eating its life away.

The rubbish was cleared, fresh, mould and manure were put to the roots, and the next summer little Jack had the privilege of plucking the first ripe pear.

What Jack did for the pear tree we may all do for each other; patiently bear with each other's faults and short-comings and never give up hope.

Our own lives are made up of beginnings. Then why are we so hard on others?

Just one more "digging about it" with gentle, warning words; just one more repetition of the old, old story of a Saviour's love and power may be the very thing that is needed to save a soul. Let us take heed lest we grudgingly refuse it.

Where should you and I be, reader, if Jesus had not pleaded for us, "Let it alone this year also."

How patiently He waits now, year after year, perhaps, "whispering par-

don, full and free," and we turn our backs on him, and refuse to believe that He is able and willing to save.

Now, even now, as you read this, He is pleading with you, "Come unto me;" and pleading with his Father too, "Let it alone this year also." Oh, listen to him! Not to-morrow or next week, but at this very moment take him for your Saviour. Cast yourselves at his feet, and let "Jesus only" be your watchword; and as you feel the saving power the unfruitful trees around you.

Oh, that we had more boldness for Christ, and copy that little schoolboy, who bravely spoke up for the condemned tree.

Let us plead then earnestly with our friends to accept God's glad message of salvation, and let us plead for them at the throne of grace, remembering our dear Lord's promise, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name. He will give it you."

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