

"Poh!" said Arthur Holmes; "let him see what the use of talking? It's natural enough that he shouldn't want to drink cider; his great-grandfather and his grandfather were both drunkards, and his father when he was a small boy laughed at another boy for being afraid to say his name, and then to drown his remorse in drinking cider, and was never any more of a drinker." "Arthur Holmes was nearly four years older than Reuben, and had the name of being very witty; this must account for the boys laughing, many of them seemed to think they must, when Arthur spoke, and two or three looked over at Reuben though they thought this was pretty good, and they were sorry for him. Reuben, however, was not at all troubled; he was one of those fortunate boys who always grew unconcerned when people said to say false and foolish things about little people. Had there been even a shadow of truth in Arthur's words, I do not know how he might have felt, but as it was, he fixed a rest! In his good-natured eyes on Arthur as he said: "You are not very good at it, after all, you ought to hear some of the poor fellows who get their living by telling stories; you could beat you all to pieces, and scare them too, sometimes; there won't be a soul here who says that there is a heaven, but you see they don't know any better." This time the laugh was against Arthur, and the rest of the listeners having seen enough to see that Reuben had given him a very good answer. "Let him alone," said John Stuart good-humoredly. "If a fellow doesn't want to drink sweet cider, I don't believe in making him do it; there will be all the more left for us." But Kate Wells had no idea of giving it in that way. She brought her sparkling cider and sat down beside Reuben. "But I want you to tell me," she began in a clear voice that could be heard all over the room, "just why you don't believe in drinking sweet cider. You are not afraid of being a drunkard, are you?" "Yes," said Reuben soberly; "I am afraid of being a drunkard." And Beth, hearing this, hearing the lamentations of surprise, and dismay, and amazement, that went around the room, as though she would like to slip down through the floor somewhere out of sight. "But that is being a coward!" said Kate Wells, who nearly always spoke her thoughts aloud, without stopping to think if they would sound. The boys laughed at this, and Arthur Holmes said: "That's plain English, anyhow." "What is being a coward?" Reuben asked, and Kate tried to answer. "Why—why—it's being afraid, of course." Then all the boys and some of the girls stood to talk at once, and tell what they thought was the meaning of the word coward, and they got into such confusion that John Stuart said: "Hold on, I'll ask the old fellow in his right, but what he thinks about it; his opinion is worth three of ours, any day." He dragged down Webster's *Unabridged*, and turning over it a few minutes, read aloud: "Coward: a person who lacks courage to do what he has no objection to." Most of the listeners seemed surprised by this definition; it did not quite seem to fit Reuben for refusing to drink cider; but Arthur Holmes was for holding to it. "Well, suppose there was danger to some one in drinking cider—mind you I don't believe it—but suppose there was, then the people who are all the time so afraid of the name, that they can't enjoy it, nor let anybody else enjoy it, are cowards, I should think." "Hold on," said Reuben. "If there is danger to anybody, then I must have a good reason for going into it, and setting other people an example to follow, mustn't I?" "That is what we agreed in the class, only on Sunday, anyhow. Now, where's my argument for drinking cider, if there is a danger that anybody in the world might be harmed by it?" "I didn't say there was any such fear," said Arthur. But the talk was getting away from where Kate Wells wanted to keep it. "But what I want to know is," she said,

looking at Reuben, "why you come to be different from the rest of the boys about this? What made you think of cider, and decide that it was wrong to drink it, and give it up when you say you like it? Did anybody tell you you must?" "Of course there did. His mother told him to-night just before he left home that if he drank a drop of cider, she would tie him to the bedpost and feed him on castor oil for a week." "Of course this was Arthur Holmes who was trying so hard to be funny; but the boys were not ready to laugh, they were listening to Reuben's answer. "Yes," he said, speaking slowly and gravely, "somebody told me I mustn't be a soldier; I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. I've promised to fight for everything that is right, and to fight against everything that is wrong, as long as I live; and I know rum is wrong, and I know it leads people down to awful places. I've seen more of it than any of you, I suppose; you can't walk through the streets of a big city, as I did every day for years, without seeing enough of it to make you hate it. I've been in terrible danger too, with a drunken man; it wasn't my father," and here Reuben's eyes flashed. "My father has been dead so many years that I don't remember him at all, but I know he hated rum. It was a stranger to me, but I thought that he and I would both be killed together, all because of rum, and I hate it. I talked with a friend about cider, and she showed me plain enough that there was danger in it, and since then I've read about it, and heard two temperance lectures on it by great men, and I know there is danger in it; so then it is wrong, and I'm bound to fight against it, because I am a soldier." It was a long speech for Reuben to make. When he began, he had not the least idea that he would say so much, but the words seemed to come almost without his knowing it. Nobody laughed when he stopped, and some of the little girls set back their glasses and concluded they didn't want any more cider. "Come," said John Stuart at last, "we've had talk enough; let's play some games." Soon afterwards Beth and Reuben took the stilted walk home that they had ever taken in their lives. Reuben was dumb with disappointment over the evening; not for what the boys had said; he had been used to boys all his life, rougher boys than these ever thought of being, but because Beth had not said and done as he thought she would. The winter which was now almost gone had been a disappointment to him in this regard. In his honest and earnest heart Reuben had fully expected Beth to join him as soon as ever she heard of the great news that he was a soldier; indeed he had not thought of going without Beth. But to his great dismay she was not interested in his new hopes and plans. Her head was full of her pretty new dresses and ruffles, and new ways of leading her hair, and in looking and acting as much as possible like other little girls of her age. She worked hard on her bright brass machine, driving the needle between the shining teeth in a way that astonished even herself, and earning more money each day than her mother had been able to earn in the city, working twelve hours a day; but her ambition was to earn money enough to go to school, and study French, and perhaps, after a while, take music lessons. "Who knows?" said Beth to herself. "A great many wonderful things have happened this year; some more things may happen before the year is out." So though she was bright, and eager, and industrious, as ready as ever to enter into all Reuben's plans for work or study, on this one subject that was every day growing to be more to Reuben than anything else, she was unconcerned. So they were both still on this moonlight evening as they walked home together from their first party. Neither was as blissfully happy as both had expected to be. "Oh Beth!" Reuben said at last, "I didn't think you would drink the cider." "Why not, I wonder! I haven't signed your old pledge, and I don't mean to. I think it is silly, anyway, and awfully proud in you, Reuben Stone, to set yourself up to know more than all those boys and girls who have been to school all their lives. I only sipped the cider, and it was nice and sweet, and if you had kept still I might have had a nice time; and I didn't a bit;

and I never want to go anywhere again, so there!" Reuben had never in his life heard his sister talk in that fashion before; he did not know what to say. At last he tried to explain. "But Beth, I couldn't, you know. I had signed the pledge; and I couldn't, anyway, because I am a soldier, and oh, Beth, I thought you were going to be one!" "Well, I'm not!" declared Beth in her sharpest tone. "I don't want to be a soldier, nor anything that makes you different from other people; I've been different all my life, never had things, nor gone to places not done like other little girls; and now, just when I've got a chance to be like them, and have a good time, you go and spoil it all with your notions about its being wrong to drink cider, and wrong to laugh at a funny story, and wrong to do anything; and you go and tell them about your never having had any chances, and about newsways, and bootblacks, and everything! You never used to be so! Before you went and got these notions you would do anything for me, and now you spoil all the good things I might have; and I never want to be a soldier at all; and I wish you wasn't one, so there!" And poor, angry, little Beth burst into a perfect passion of tears, and dashed into the house like a comet. And that was the way that first evening out, which they had looked forward to, ended. "No, not quite that way. Beth went directly up-stairs, but Reuben stopped in the little parlor a moment. No one was there but Miss Hunter. She greeted him with a cheery smile, and a question: "Well, my boy, did you see anything of Satan to-night?" "O, Miss Hunter! he was there all the time, and busier than I ever saw him before." "I'll warrant you; get a party of boys and girls together, and he's on hand." "And, Miss Hunter, he is after Beth." "Of course he is. Do you think he is going to let such a pretty, bright little girl as Beth alone, and let her slip away from him without a hard fight? He is much too sharp a captain for that. Don't you let him get her, my boy." "I don't know," said Reuben doubtfully. "I don't believe I can help it. Down there in the city where there were fifty chances for going wrong where there is one here, she was just the best girl! I thought maybe after I found out about it that she had been a soldier all the time, and didn't know it. But up here where everything is nice and pleasant, and it is as easy again to do right, she seems just as different, you can't think." "Yes, I can think," said Miss Hunter, nodding her gray head. "Satan has different ways for different people, and he knows just how to catch a pretty girl like our Beth; it is twice as hard a place for her to do right in as it was in that dingy north room of yours, shut up with her mother." "But look here, my boy, you can't do much, to be sure, alone; but isn't that Captain of yours strong enough to manage Satan in the country as well as in the city? Do you suppose he has got any plans that your Captain don't understand? Well, then, just you go to Him about Beth, tell Him the whole story, and ask Him to show you just how to get her to wear your colors. If I were you I would tell Him all about it this very night." Reuben did. (To be Continued.)

A WORD TO THE BOYS.

I wonder if you know how much everybody is expecting of you, Will and Frank. I never pass you on the street with your books under your arm; I never return your polite salutations without thinking that there is a world of work waiting for you, and you will be in the very midst of it in ten or fifteen or twenty years from now. By the way, how charming it is to see that boys all over are very much more courteous than they were a while ago. Off comes the lad's cap whenever he meets mamma or sister, or any one of mamma's friends on the highway. His "I beg pardon" is ready if he is obliged to pass before you or does not hear what you say. And it is very, very seldom that one sees a boy, whether poor or rich, occupying a seat while an old or feeble gentleman or lady is left to stand. There is certainly an improvement in good manners among our boys. Boys in these days should be wide-awake.

There are traps and snares especially set for them, which I wish they could be persuaded to avoid. One is contact with impure companions. No matter how clever, how manly-looking, or how handsome a certain big fellow of your acquaintance may be, if you hear him using profane language or speaking sneeringly of his parents, have nothing to do with him. Our comrades help to make us. Another bit of advice I would give you is this. Avoid silly, sensational stories, particularly those which tell of crimes and hair-breadth escapes and unlikely happenings generally, and are sold for ten cents or less at the book stands. The very pictures on these publications are enough to make one shudder. Besides there are plenty of good books which are vastly more entertaining than anything these catchpenny dreadfuls have to offer you. If you do not know where to find such, ask your Sunday-school teacher, or pastor, or some older friend who cares for boys and likes to see them happy. Go to church where your parents go. Do not get into the bad habit of roving about from church to church. Even though it may not be insisted upon at home, go always with the family, and sit in your place in the family pew. Be attentive to your sister, just as attentive as you are to Tom's or Ned's sister. Never let her feel that she has need of an escort or a companion while she has a brother. Pray every day and never omit your morning prayers. Some people think that it is quite enough to pray at night. But morning prayer is just as useful and just as important. Pray to be kept from temptation and delivered from evil. While still a boy stand up for Jesus. Come out boldly, enter the church and own your Saviour. We want an army of young men to fight the Lord's battles, and we want you to be one of their number.—*Christian Intelligencer.*

"EARL CAIRNS ON THRIFT."

Such were the words which caught the eye of one of our readers a few days ago. That reader was once a timid, quiet, gentle little boy, altogether unlike his schoolfellows, whose games and playful tricks were of too good a kind for his gentle disposition. His "pocket-money" was not spent on what Earl Cairns calls "useless things, often doing more harm than good," but was put into his money-box, and annually taken charge of by his most excellent father, who duly credited his boy with interest on the amounts. When that boy attained the age of twenty-one years, he had saved the sum of one hundred pounds! And what did he do with it? He thought it was very unusual for boys to save so much in their early days, so he thought he had better take an unusual course with respect to it; and he resolved that the amount should be considered as permanently invested at five per cent interest, and he would give this interest during his lifetime to God. Many years have passed since then, and here and there may be seen upon his locks the evidences of declining age, and if you inquire whether his resolution has been faithfully kept, the answer is, "It has," but with considerable increase. The little yearly sum of five pounds as interest is annually received into a larger stream, and not only scores but hundreds of pounds find their way into it, and the stream flows on. Young reader, follow, and induce others to follow the example of this boy, whose name we should have been glad to place here on record, but we are not permitted to do so. If the money spent by children on "useless things, often doing them more harm than good," were given by those children to God, what an immense amount of good would result, and what blessings would flow to them through life!—*The Christian.*

Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

I COR. 15: 58.