

"A CHRISTIAN GAVE IT TO ME."

"A Christian gave it to me"—that fatal glass which proved the turning point. The Ru- bicon Once crossed, my path was clear to ruin. I knew its power, and I was straggling sore, Against the deadly spell. Full many a time Had taunts of boon companions made me yield. But grace was given to turn away from them And now, when I had hoped—yes, hoped once more, That health, and happiness, and home were mine, A noble lady, one bright New Year's morn, Pressed me to take a glass "just for this once," In honor of her hospitality.

She did not dream—how could she?—what was meant By drinking that one little drop of wine. The buried craving of the days gone by Uprose anew within me, and I fell A victim to its power, my being seamed As set on fire of hell, and from that hour To this, my downward course was swift and sure.

Oh, Christian! pause and think; was it your hand— A sister's hand, perchance, which should have helped— That put temptation in a brother's way? You say, "I would not," but you cannot tell Their soul-surroundings who may cross your path; You do not know, oh, then consider well, The possibilities of every case, And let no erring ones have cause to say That by your means they have been led astray. —The Christian.

THOSE DREADFUL BOYS.

BY MARY E. C. WYETH.

"You'll try them, wont you? They're a dreadful lot, I know, and they terrify every teacher that approaches them. I'd rather take an electric shock every five minutes all through the Sunday-school hour than to undertake that class myself. And yet I don't know what can be done with them, if you wont give me a trial."

The superintendent anxiously awaited Mrs. Lyste's response. He had ventured a good deal, he thought, in asking so much. The class was notorious—the Sunday-school nuisance, some of the Fair Avenue Church Sunday-school folks called it. Composed of seven lads between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, and occupying the front seat, because that was the least adapted for the spreading of demoralizing elements, this class of boys had by its unwearied efforts in ill-doing, rendered itself not only obnoxious, but dreaded. All the girls of the Sunday-school spoke of the class as "those dreadful boys." Mrs. Lyste had heard of it. "It is a mass of misdirected energy," she had said of it. And her heart yearned over it. So when the call came to her she answered promptly, "I will take them. I have no constitutional objections to boys."

"No, oh, no!" quickly replied the superintendent, greatly relieved to have the class off his hands, "nor have I. But these are exceptionally bad boys. I really hope you will not regret—"

But Mrs. Lyste had followed quickly as the apologizing superintendent passed up the aisle, and was at the pew-door as soon as he. The lads saw her bright smile and nod of salutation, and involuntarily responded to it. Whether or not they heard the superintendent's stereotyped introduction is not so certain.

"We shall get on very well, I am sure," said Mrs. Lyste. "I will not detain you." And the superintendent, radiant with relief, bowed himself away; instead indeed, but not so hastily but that his ear caught the "Far' yo' well, brother Crawford," slyly tossed after him by one of the dreadful boys.

"Let us get acquainted right off, so as to have a good time together," said Mrs. Lyste, bustling a little among the hymn-books and lesson-papers, and taking the corner boy by the hand.

"Your name, please?" "Willie Davis," came the ready response. "Ah, Willie, I am very glad to know you."

We shall be good friends. And this is?" extending her hand to the next lad. "Willie Martin," replied the lad, giving his hand promptly.

"I am very glad to meet you too, Willie."

And you are?"

"Will Burton. And that fellow is Billy Williams," answered the lad requisitely.

"Bless my bunch of sweet Willies," said the lady, taking in the quartette with her bright smile, as she cordially grasped Will Burton's not very clean hand. "And now?"

"Rob Denslow."

"Rob is a good name too," said Mrs. Lyste, "and I've no doubt that a good, loving mother, who longs to be proud of its wearer, gave it to you. I am very glad that we are to try together to make her so, Rob. This is your brother, is it not?"

"Yes'm. It's Tom."

"Tom? Oh, I've a brother Tom of my very own too. How nice to have a Tom and a Rob among my sweet Willies. And this is Willie Schuyler. We ought to be fast friends at once, Willie, for your papa and I were school-mates once in the good old days when we were young and untroubled, like you all. I'm ever so glad to have this class," she went on, handing the lesson-papers as she talked. "I don't know just how your former teacher conducted her exercises, but perhaps it doesn't matter. The way we shall do to-day will be to follow the prescribed order as nearly as we can, and all of us do our very best. Shall we?"

"Bill Davis never will read the verses," said Rob, slyly flipping a corn kernel at Willie's ear.

"Behave yourself," whispered Willie a bit crossly, "or I'll—"

"We'll all read to-day, because I shall need all the help I can get, you know. I shall depend on you, Willie, to back me up. Your voice is good and strong," said Mrs. Lyste, ignoring the little battle and passage-at-arms, and beaming on Willie Davis, whose frown instantly faded.

"Nothing brass up the average boy more than to let him feel that you depend on him."

"Just remember this one rule in reading aloud and you can't go very far wrong: give every vowel its full sound. Now, loud and clear, and slowly."

She led the responsive reading, the boys chiming in, following her lead nobly. Never had that class read in that manner before. At the end of the third response the school fell in with the class. It had gone faster in the first verses. All eyes were directed to those dreadful boys and their new teacher. They were actually taking a leading part, and taking it well.

"If you sing as well as you read I shall be very proud of you," was all that Mrs. Lyste said as she passed the hymn-books.

"I can't do anything but make a noise. No use trying," muttered Will Burton.

"Well, make a joyful noise unto the Lord," said Mrs. Lyste, smiling brightly. "The rest of us will try to throw our music into it. All sing, please, and attend to the meaning of the words."

They sang, Will Burton and all, and the classes nearest by wondered what had got into those boys.

The prayer was a little too long, as superintendents' opening prayers are sometimes wont to be, and there were signs of the old leaven working during its progress. Once Mrs. Lyste's hand rested for a moment with gentle touch on Tom Denslow's arm and once on Will Martin's, but she never opened her eyes. Her golden opportunity came with the lesson hour.

"Perhaps some of us may not have studied this lesson as we ought," she said, "so we'll just put our heads together and study it now. We don't want to miss our object in coming here. No riches in the world are to be compared with the riches to be found in this blessed Bible. Let us search for them to-day as though this was to be our last and only chance. If we attend closely and improve every moment, I think we can mine the whole ground over once and find some gold, I trust, and still have a few minutes left for a story I'd like to tell you."

Then she began her work. And work it was. But it was well-aimed, well-continued and successful work. Those boys attended to that lesson as they had never before attended to one, and so interested were they that they quite forgot to fill out their usual programme of popping peas, pulling hair, sticking pins, and producing confusion generally.

The story was a splendid one, well told, with a strong wholesome moral, and it won the entire approbation of the class. Those dreadful boys were on good terms with the new teacher at its conclusion.

"How did you get on?" asked the superintendent nervously, as the classes were filing out. The boys were near. They heard Mrs. Lyste's reply.

"Oh, we're skirmishing along the line. We'll fall in ranks pretty soon. We're bound to come out all right. We've a lot of enemies to conquer, but we mean to win the battle. This class is going to distinguish itself."

"Cosar!" whispered Rob Denslow. "I should say it had done that, if she did but know it."

And then they all got out upon the street and were a shade less dreadful than on the previous Sunday.

The next Sunday and the next found teacher and scholars coming into closer harmony. The class was invited to Mrs. Lyste's house for a jolly evening at the end of the first month. The boys never forgot the delights of that evening. Mrs. Lyste told stories, played games with them, sang old-fashioned songs, and at last proposed to boil molasses and make taffy.

"The cook is out, and so is the kitchen fire," she laughed, "but that's no matter where there are boys around. Come on, we'll find the kindlings and the molasses jug, and the fun will find itself, I'll engage."

They trooped beside her to the kitchen. Will Martin spied the hatchet at once, and made haste to split kindlings and build a fire. Rob measured out molasses, and the other boys, armed with hammers and hatchet and sad-irons made war on a pan of walnuts that Mrs. Lyste had provided.

Willie Davis offered to watch and stir the molasses. Mrs. Lyste drew a chair up to the kitchen table and plied the nut-pick.

"It makes me think I am a boy again," she laughed as she took her place in the midst of the merry circle. "I never shall forget the day I first tried walking on stilts with my brother. We had such fun. I wonder if boys nowadays have as good times as they did when I was young. How do you boys amuse yourselves when you are off duty?"

And so she led them to tell of their sports, their base ball clubs, their excursions of one sort and another; and as she did not constitute herself a commenting critic, she had some very enlightening information given her on the habits and manners of her boys when left entirely to themselves.

It came out that they indulged sometimes in cider drinking—every one of them. Rob Denslow liked beer, and took a glass whenever he could get it. He acquired the liking for it when he was a little fellow visiting his German cousins in Cincinnati. Even the babies drank beer there. His folks had it on the table every meal. Willie Davis thought beer poor stuff but owned that he liked wine first-rate. Always had a glass when he dined with his uncle Joe. Two other Willies thought egg-nog just delicious. Three of the lads smoked cigarettes, and Rob Denslow generally smoked one cigar a day.

It all came out inadvertently, without a question or comment by the hostess, and the boys never suspected they were furnishing their teacher with an opportunity as they laughed and joked and pulled the ropes of flaky taffy, and drank the refreshing lemonade that their good friend had in readiness for them as they returned to the parlor, heated and thirsty after the kitchen fun. Yet when they had gone and the last echo of their cheery noisy chatter had died away on the street, Mrs. Lyste turned away from the door and, entering the deserted parlor, sat down with folded hands and thoughtful eyes and pondered upon what she had heard and seen.

"What danger they are in, poor lads," she murmured pityingly. And then she knelt and besought the Lord for the souls of those precious boys. To her they were never dreadful.

To earnest, well-directed effort little is denied. With heart and soul and mind and strength Mrs. Lyste entered upon the work of winning these boys from the power of evil for the service of the Lord she loved. Several Sabbaths later she surprised the class with an announcement.

"Boys," she said, as she took up the lesson papers, "there is a work for the Master that needs to be done over in the B— Street neighborhood, and I've thought and

prayed over it for weeks, and I've come to the conclusion that it is just our work—yours and mine. We've got to set about saving some of the boys over there who play ball about that soda and bottled beer stand on B— Street Square every Sunday afternoon. They are going to ruin. It wrings my heart to see it. We can save them if we will. We must save them."

"We?" chorused the class with wide eyes and questioning tones.

"We. This class," said Mrs. Lyste. "Aren't we all on God's side, the side of honor and unselfish good-will to all? Who of us is against this? And aren't we courageous enough to arm ourselves and go out to conquer an enemy when our Captain calls? We come here Sunday after Sunday to study God's Word because we believe in God and desire to know his will, don't we?"

"Yes'm," came promptly from every boy.

"Yes'm," came promptly from every boy. "We don't understand all yet, but we're learning every day, and our Scientist has said that if any of us will do his will he shall know of the doctrine. Now, we may as well commit ourselves here and now—we may never have another chance. We desire to make the most of ourselves and of our opportunities, don't we? We are honestly willing to own that Christian character is the best thing, and the thing that we desire for ours, and we are willing to strive hard to attain it. We are willing to be known as recruits for the grandest service the world has ever known, and to enlist under the banner of the cross with Jesus as our Captain, to go forth to do battle with all forces of evil, aren't we? Then, when we're led right up to a battery of Satan, we have just one thing to do—take up our weapons, march on, and take it by storm."

"Now these B— Street boys. We can't go to them with clubs and swords and beat them off their ground, and haul them to the Sunday-school and put Bibles in their hands." The boys laughed out at the idea.

"But we can go to them with another sort of weapon, and we can draw them from the play ground to the Sunday-school. If we determine to do it, we can do it. Shall we determine?"

"All right. Let's try it," said one. "But you'll have to tell us how," said another. "Boys won't read tracts, and those boys won't stand any foolin'."

"We sha'n't fool," said Mrs. Lyste. "neither will we ask them to read tracts. I've a plan thought out. I want you to approve it, however, and so I invite you to my house to-morrow evening, when we'll organize for action. Then I'll tell you of my plan, and then we'll set about work."

"Yes'm. Some good will come of it, if we only set our minds to the work and seek God's blessing. Now for the lesson, and to-morrow for the practical application of it."

The boys were quite at home in Mrs. Lyste's parlor now. There had been a monthly reunion ever since the class had been here. They had listened to good music, had examined curious objects from all parts of the world, had heard famous stories, had romped and eaten and drank and made merry many a time in those pleasant rooms. They would never miss a gathering, even though the idea of a personal responsibility hung over it, and promptly at the hour on Monday evening they were on hand.

"We are to have oysters and hot waffles at ten," Mrs. Lyste said, as she seated the boys around her library table, "so we want to get through the business of the evening in time for a little play-spell before supper, therefore we will proceed at once to the serious subject before us. We won't enter upon any work for God in our own unaided strength, we need the divine help. Let us kneel and seek it."

"Blessed Lord, our only helper," she prayed, "here we are, a little band of raw recruits, ready and willing for thy service; where thou leadest we will follow. Weak for thy Holy Spirit to animate and inspire us. We want to be thine own dear children and faithful servants. If we are not wholly consecrated to thee, then come thou now and consecrate us. We bring our hearts to be just as they are, and we ask thee to take them and cleanse them and make them fit abodes for the indwelling of thy Spirit. We desire to do a work for thee. Help us, Lord, that we may help those about us, help us to win those boys who play every Sunday on B— Street lot to a better way. Give each of us good sense to know how to act, and a good-will that shall make our

actions part with us a work ourselves organizing thy own earnest Amen. And hearty. As it drew f book. in large

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