

A Boy's King.

BY S. E. KISER.

My papa, he's the bestest man
Whatever lived, I bet,
And I ain't never seen no one
As smart as he is yet.
Why, he knows everything, almost,
But mamma says that he
Ain't never been the President,
And that surprises me.

And often papa talks about
How he must work away—
He's got to toil for other folks,
And do what others say;
And that's a thing that bothers me—
When he's so good and great,
He ought, I think, at least to be
The Gov'nor of the State!

He knows the names of lots of stars,
And he knows all the trees,
And he can tell the different kinds
Of all the birds he sees,
And he can multiply and add
And figure in his head—
They might have been some smarter men,
But I bet you they are dead.

Once when he thought I wasn't near,
He talked to mamma then,
And told her how he hates to be
The slave of other men.
And how he wished that he was rich,
For her and me—and I
Don't know what made me do it, but
I had to go and cry!

And so when I sat on his knee,
I ast him: "Is it true
That you're a slave and have to toil
When others tell you to?
You are so big and good and wise,
You surely ought to be
The President, instead of just
A slave, it seems to me."

And then the tears came in his eyes,
And he hugged me tight and said:
"Why, no, my dear, I'm not a slave—
What put that in your head?
I am a king—the happiest king
That ever yet held sway,
And only God can take my throne,
And my little realm away!"
—Cleveland Leader.

AT THE AUCTION.

BY HELEN A. HAWLEY.

It was only a sale of household furniture, and as the day was in midsummer, the auction was held in the front yard of the dismantled home. The house was an old-fashioned square brick. Probably it was once the great house of the village. Now the bricks were weather-stained, the blinds had many broken slats, here and there hinges were lacking. There was a mournful air of decadence about it. The great house had reached the last disgrace. It was "sold on a mortgage."

Groups of country women stood about, discussing in low tones the merits of each article. Various country vehicles were outside the fence, the horses expending their surplus energies in lashing flies with their tails. Fortunately these appendages had never been shortened in obedience to fashion's demands.

The men talked over their crops. Now and then a man elbowed his way to a point where he could nudge his women folks, and whisper a caution about bidding "too high." On the sidewalk several amused spectators loitered—people who were in the country for the summer, and seized upon anything to vary the monotony.

The auctioneer, a burly, middle-aged man, was sufficiently witty for his business, and doubtless helped the sales somewhat by the absurdity of his claims. "Here's this couch—must have cost twenty-five dollars, worth fifteen to-day if it is a cent."

The last words might constitute a saving clause, a saving of the truth. For the poor old couch was upholstered with the coarsest carpeting, its gaudy flowers now worn off to the gray background, while the humps so plainly visible showed that the springs were topsyturvy. Everything sells at an auction, and this twenty-five-dollar piece found a place in some humble home, at the humble price of two dollars and fifty cents.

The bids didn't take long jumps, but crept up by five, ten, twenty-five cent steps. When the auctioneer held up a breadth of old rag carpet so skillfully as to hide the holes, his audience shouted in glee, and when he named the battered, two-tined forks, "the latest thing in oyster-forks," it was considered the last achievement of humour.

All this was very amusing, if it had not been pathetic. Pathetic, because one old man stood there and saw his home demolished, saw his household

goods cheapened, ridiculed, sold for a song.

To him, every article was sacred. Each one held some memory of wife or child. Wife and children were all gone now. The old man was left to spend his few remaining years in loneliness and poverty.

Evidently he had merved himself for the occasion. He stood in the background, chatting by fits and starts with a neighbour, trying to take things with a careless air.

This was in the earlier part of the afternoon. But when the auctioneer laid his hand upon a plain wooden desk, and called for bids with the usual remarks on "this elegant piece of furniture," the old man's manner changed. He came forward and touched it with tenderness. He scanned eagerly the faces of the possible buyers. He lowered the lid, disclosing drawers and pigeon-holes.

It was a rude affair, standing on a small, four-legged table. Perhaps he made it himself in his younger days. Any one with a little skill at tools could easily have done so.

But this old man had been a power in his time; he had occupied various positions of village trust. This desk had held public documents, it had seen government service. Here his signature had been written, when that signature meant something. Now, alas! it would scarcely pass muster even on a promise to pay. To part with this desk was to relinquish the last vestige of former greatness, to sink to the level of common men. No wonder his face was keen and haggard.

Desks did not seem to be at a premium in that crowd. The bids were few and feeble. The auctioneer, a compassionate man, and mindful of his own per cent. withal, delayed the final stroke.

In the gathering were three lad-country boys. They were great friends and generally pulled together. Some man who read books once named them "the three musketeers." Had they heard it, they wouldn't have known that this phrase was a synonym for loyal friendship. They had had much fun at this auction, slipping in bids where they dared, inciting others to bid, rollicking around generally, though not in a noisy way.

When the old man approached the desk, the oldest of these boys noticed him, and the laughing face became sober with unwonted sympathy. He sought the other two and they whispered together. An eavesdropper might have heard words like these: "Hard on the old fellow." "That's immense!" "Don't believe it'll go higher than a five." "I've got a dollar sixty." "And you said two twenty-five—a dollar sixty and two twenty-five, and I've got two fifty. I guess 'twill do it. Now, scatter!"

By this time the slow bidding had reached "one seventy-five." The auctioneer held his hammer poised to strike the word "Gone!" when a voice called "Two dollars!"

"Two, two, two," roared the auctioneer, "going at two." But the new bid acted as a stimulus. If some one really wanted the ancient article, it might be worth striving for. The old man's face visibly brightened. At least his heart's treasure wouldn't go for a mere nothing.

Such a strife couldn't last, however, there being a bottom to the country purse, and no lack of good sense in the country brain. The last bid came—"Five dollars, ten." No one seemed inclined to raise it, and the name of the buyer was handed very carefully to the auctioneer.

That night the old man went to a lowly home, in one room of which he was to be sheltered in the future. It was all he could afford now. He went with many sad thoughts of former joys and comforts, yet trying bravely, submissively, to take his reverses like a Christian.

As he entered the room, almost dreading its bare aspect, the first object he saw was the dear, prized desk. A slip of paper was shut part-way within the lid. He pulled it out, his fingers trembling, and read these words, "From three boys, who wish it may make you happy."

The old man knelt by the desk, and the tears which fell were not altogether grievous. Surely heaven had been kind!—Christian Endeavour World.

HOW FRED'S TASTE WAS FORMED.

BY HARRIET LUMDIS.

At the sound of his wife's light step on the well-worn study carpet, the Reverend Andrew Dillingham shut up his Hebrew lexicon, his preoccupation vanishing in a moment. He would have been sadly lacking in penetration if fifteen years of married life had not

given him a key by which to translate Mrs. Dillingham's hesitating movements into an intelligible statement that something was wrong.

"Well, dear," he said, with an inquiring upward glance which confirmed his previous impression, "how can I help you?" which, by the way, was a favourite question of the Rev. Andrew Dillingham, taking the place of that other query which does such faithful service in many households, "Well, what's the matter, now?"

Mrs. Dillingham placed a collection of cheaply printed periodicals on the study table, and her husband noticed the trembling of her hand. "I found these in Fred's room," she said, simply. "I thought you ought to know."

The minister selected the uppermost of the pile for inspection, and spread it open upon his knees. "The Weekly Treasure-House," he repeated, musingly. "Nothing compromising about the name. In fact, it has a distinct suggestion of sanctity."

"And the illustrations convey quite different impressions," returned Mrs. Dillingham, smiling wanly.

"Yes, the illustrations certainly leave something to be desired," admitted Mr. Dillingham, studying critically a cut representing a spirited youth, apparently in his teens, defying a band of bearded outlaws, while a maiden in high-heeled slippers and with disheveled hair, gazed rapturously upon her preserver. "Sit down, Annie, while I look over these things."

After fifteen minutes, which seemed much longer to the waiting mother, Mr. Dillingham gave his verdict. "Silly, trashy, and demoralizing because so utterly worthless, but not actually vicious as far as I have found."

"But shouldn't we do something?" asked Mrs. Dillingham, with a mother's quick anxiety.

"Do something!" repeated her husband in a tone which set her heart at rest, "indeed we should and will. But meanwhile put these back in Fred's room and say nothing to him until I have had time to think the matter over."

That afternoon Fred and his father had an errand at the clothing-store of a nature familiar to the parents of growing boys, and on their way they stopped for a moment at the principal news-stand in town. "I suppose, Mr. Gavin," said the minister pleasantly, "that I can leave my subscription here for The Weekly Treasure-House?"

Fred jumped. The proprietor, a fat, rosy little man, gasped as if his surprise were an assailant, and had taken him by the throat. "The Weekly Treasure-House!" he repeated. "Why, yes, sir. And do I understand that you wish to subscribe for the paper?"

"A year's subscription," returned the minister, briskly. "Beginning with this month, please."

"And may I ask, Mr. Dillingham," said Mr. Gavin, his voice husky with emotion, "if you're familiar with the paper?"

"I've looked over several copies," replied Mr. Dillingham, depositing a dollar upon the counter. "I believe that's right, isn't it? Good-afternoon."

Mr. Gavin's natural surprise at this unexpected betrayal of the minister's literary taste was trifling in comparison with that which Fred experienced, and close on the heels of his bewilderment followed the keenest mortification he had ever known. He blushed till it seemed as if all the blood in his body was in his burning cheeks and tingling ears. What did Mr. Gavin think of his father, the boy wondered, casting an indignant side-glance at the little man's apoplectic face. What would the postman think when he delivered copies of The Weekly Treasure-House addressed to the Rev. Andrew Dillingham? With his mind full of these perplexities poor Fred had little thought to give to the selection of his new suit, and the salesman and the minister settled it between them.

Yet worse was to come. It was the custom of the Dillinghams to read aloud on the evenings they were at home together, and only the week before they had finished a classic volume which all three had enjoyed equally. It is not easy to describe Fred's feelings when that evening, as they gathered about the shaded lamp, his mother took from her sewing-basket a copy of the already detested Weekly Treasure-House, confiscated from the pile upstairs, and quietly began the harrowing tale, the first instalment of which appeared in that number. As the reading progressed Fred writhed in his chair. It was one thing to follow the fortunes of "Hank, the Avenger," when concealed behind the cover of a cheap geography, stored away in the loft of somebody's barn, but quite another to hear his mother's sweet voice describing the Avenger's bloody deeds. If Mr. Dillingham found anything incongruous in the combination of his

wife's lady-like accents and cow-boy slang, his tranquil face betrayed nothing of his sentiments. Fred's feelings were not under such control. It was easy to see the keenness of his mortification.

For a fortnight the readings continued faithfully. Besides making "Hank's" acquaintance, Fred's father and mother had become familiar with the doings of a talented amateur detective, young only in years, who, stumbling upon a clue to a mystery which had long baffled the police, followed it up so skillfully as to expose a gang of criminals, and lift the incubus of suspicion from the shoulders of the innocent. To the list of their fictitious heroes they also were privileged to add the name of "Klondike Karl," a spoiled favourite of fortune if one ever lived, as well as that of a warlike youth from New York, who having allied himself with the Cuban insurgents, performed deeds of valour such as history fails to chronicle. By the time one Treasure-House was exhausted, another was on hand with a fresh story of valuables.

Fred came home one afternoon in a state of pleasurable excitement. "There's going to be a stereopticon lecture at our school to-morrow night," he told his father during supper. "It's about Japan, and there'll be lots of pictures. I can go, can't I?"

Mr. Dillingham reflected. "Why, I've no objection to your going if you really think you'd enjoy it. But the Treasure-House comes to-morrow afternoon, and if you'd prefer to hear the next chapter about that boy who ran away from home to go to the Klondike—"

Fred choked over his milk toast, and his eyes filled. "O father! I don't want to hear any more of that story."

"Not to-morrow evening, I suppose you mean," said his father looking at him. "Well, it will keep till Friday."

"I don't want it on Friday either," cried the boy. "I don't want to hear that silly kind of story ever again, as long as I live. They ain't true, and they ain't funny, and they ain't nothing," said Fred, hurling out the negatives recklessly. "I'd rather hear anything. I'd rather hear that big history of Greece you've got in your study."

Mr. Dillingham smoothed away a smile. "Well, my boy," he said, "from certain signs I imagined this might be your favourite sort of literature, and I'm rather glad to find I was mistaken. I think, myself, you could use your time better than in reading such stories."

"I've had enough of 'em to last me," the boy answered, and then he devoted himself to his milk toast, and ate rather fast to make up for lost time.

Two duties remained to be disposed of before Fred could be satisfied. One was to write to the office of The Weekly Treasure-House and order the paper discontinued. The other was to volunteer an explanation to the proprietor of the news-stand.

"You see, Mr. Gavin, my father wouldn't want a paper like that in his house."

"No, indeed," assented Mr. Gavin, "I was sure there must be some mistake that day he stopped in and subscribed. It ain't a paper for ministers, though it's pretty good for boys."

Fred sniffed. "Well," he returned with decision, "I don't think much of a boy who gets any fun from reading that sort of stuff." And the best thing about the superior sentiment was the fact that it was not a mere echo of a father's opinion, but the sincere conviction of the boy's own heart.—Interior.

"O-u-g-h;" or, the Cross Farmer.

A farmer's boy, starting to plough,
Once harnessed an ox with a cough;
But the farmer came out,
With a furious shout,
And told him he didn't know hough.

In a manner exceedingly rough,
He proceeded to bluster and blough.
He scolded and scowled,
He raved and he howled,
And declared he'd have none of such stough.

At length, with a groan and a cough
He dragged the poor boy to the trough,
And ducking him in
Till wet to his chin,
Discharged him and ordered him ough.

And now my short story is through—
And I will not assert that it's trougl.
But it's chiefly designed
To impress on your mind
What wonders our spelling can dough

And I hope you will grant that although
It may not be the smoothest in slough,
It has answered its end
If it only shall tend
To prove what I meant it to shough.
—St. Nicholas.