

AN INCIDENT IN SCHOOL LIFE.

Incidents trifling in themselves have an important influence in determining the character of a life. A word spoken in season, a cruel taunt, wounding the heart to its core, have been the turning points in destiny, and put a young mind on the high road of fortune, or sent it downward to ruin. Almost every person can recall some occurrence in early life which gave tone and impulse to effort, and imbued the mind with a certain purpose. We give place to the following true narrative, as an illustration of this fact, and because it inculcates a truth which every man, woman and child may profitably bear in mind.

Years ago, when I was a boy, it was customary and probably is now, to some extent among district schools in the country, to have spelling schools in the winter term. These gatherings were always anticipated with great interest by the scholars, as at those times was to be decided who was the best speller. Occasionally one school would visit another for a test of scholarship in this regard. Ah! how the little hearts would throb, and big ones thump in their anxiety to beat the whole.

Once on a time a neighboring school came to our school, and on a certain day in the afternoon, they would meet in our school house for one of these contests. As the time was short, most of the other studies were suspended, and at school and at home in the evenings all hands were studying to master the monosyllables, dissyllables, polysyllables, abbreviations, &c., &c., which the spelling-books contained.

At length the day arrived, and as our visitors were considered rather our superiors, our fears and anxieties were proportionably great. The scholars were ranged in a standing position on opposite sides of the house, and the words pronounced on each side alternatively, and the scholar that missed was to sit down. His game was up.

It did not take long to thin the ranks on both sides. In a short time our school had but eight on the floor, and theirs but six. After a few rounds the contest turned in their favor, as they had four standing to our two. For a long time it seemed as though these six had the book by heart. At length the number was reduced to one on each side. Our visitors were represented by an accomplished young lady, whose parents had recently arrived in town, and ours by myself, a ragged little boy of ten summers, who had sat up night after night,

while my mother, with no other light than that produced by pine knots, pronounced my lesson to me. The interest of the spectators was excited to the highest pitch, as word after word was spelled by each. At length the young lady missed, and I stood alone. Her teacher said she did not understand the word. She declared that she did; that the honor was mine, and I richly deserved it. That was a proud moment for me. I had declared victor. My cheeks burned, and my brain was dizzy with excitement.

Soon as the school was dismissed, my competitor came and sat down by my side, and congratulated me on my success, enquired my name and age, and flatteringly predicted my future success in life.

Unaccustomed to such attentions I doubtless acted as most boys would under such circumstances, injudiciously. At this juncture, master G——, the son of a rich man in our neighborhood, tauntingly said to me, in the presence of my fair friend and a number of boys from the other school—"O, you needn't feel so big—your folks are poor, and your father is a drunkard."

I was happy no more—I was a drunkard's son, and how would I look my new friend in the face? My heart seemed to rise up in my throat, and almost suffocated me. The hot tears scalded my eyes—but I kept them back; and soon as possible, quietly slipped away from my companions, procured my dinner basket, and, unobserved, left the scenes of my triumph and disgrace, with a heavy heart, for my home. "My folks are poor—and my father is a drunkard." But why should I be reproached for that? I could not prevent my father from drinking, and, assisted and encouraged by my mother, I had done all I could to keep my place in my class at school, and to assist her in her worse than widowed state.

Boy as I was, I inwardly resolved never to taste of liquor, and that I would show master G——, if I was a drunkard's son, I would yet stand as high as he did. But all my resolves could not allay the gnawing grief and vexation produced by his taunting words and haughty manner. In this frame of mind—my head and heart aching, and my eyes red and swollen—I reached home. My mother saw at once that I was in trouble, and enquired the cause. I buried my face in her lap, and burst into tears. Mother, seeing my grief, waited until I was more composed, when I told her what had happened, and

added, passionately: "I wish father wouldn't be a drunkard, so we could be respectable as other folks." At first mother seemed almost overwhelmed, but quickly rallying said:

"My son I feel very sorry for you, and regret that your feelings have been so injured. G—— has twitted you about things you cannot help. But never mind my son. Be always honest; never taste a drop of liquor; study and improve your mind. Depend on your own energies, trusting in God, and you will, if your life is spared, make a useful and respected man. I wish your father, when sober, could have witnessed that scene, and realize the sorrow his course brings on us all. But keep a brave heart, my son. Remember you are responsible for only your own faults. Pray God to keep you, and don't grieve for the thoughtless reproaches that may be cast on your father's account."

This lesson of my mother's I trust was not lost upon me. Nearly forty years have gone since that day, and I have passed many trying scenes, but none ever made so strong an impression on my feelings as that heartless remark of G——'s. It was so unjust and so uncalled for. Now, boys, remember always to treat your mates with kindness. Never indulge in taunting remarks towards any one, and remember that the son of a poor man, and even of a drunkard, may have sensibilities as keen as your own.

But there is another part of this story. The other day a gentleman called at my place of business, and asked if I did not recognize him. I told him I did not. "Do you remember," said he, "of being at a spelling school at a certain time, and a rude, thoughtless boy twitted you of poverty, and being a drunkard's son?" "I do most distinctly," said I. "Well," continued the gentleman, "I am that boy. There has not probably a month of my life passed since then, but I have thought of that remark with regret and shame, and as I am about leaving for California, perhaps to end my days there, I could not go without first calling upon you, and asking your forgiveness of that act." Boys, I gave him my hand as a pledge of forgiveness. Did I do right? You, will say yes. Well, then, let me close as I began. Boys, never twit another for what he cannot help.—*Buffalo Courier.*

A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work, and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace.