

A STORY SERMON FOR THE YOUNG.

"We spend our years as a Tale that is Told."

—Ps. xc. 9.

IN the East, where books are scarce, and few people can read, telling stories is a profession by which many men earn a living. An Englishman who was travelling in Egypt encamped one evening, after suffering much during the day from flies and dust. When they had pitched their tents, he noticed a strange-looking Arab join his party. After the evening meal the chief seat in the centre of the group was given to this man, who turned out to be a teller of tales. The Englishman watched the scene. The story which the stranger told sometimes moved to tears, and at other times provoked a smile. At one point he was describing the conduct of a ruffian who first robbed and then tried to murder a man who had found him when he was a poor wanderer, and had taken him into his home and shown him the greatest kindness.

The dark eyes of the listening Arabs flashed with anger, and more than one felt for his dagger. The story was so real to them that they almost imagined the culprit was there.

The tale finished, it seemed to pass from their minds at once. Each man rolled himself up in his blanket and was soon fast asleep.

It is such a scene as this that is in the mind of the writer of this psalm, when he speaks of people spending their years "as a tale that is told." My young readers, as you look back on the year that is past, have you spent it "as a tale that is told"? In one sense I hope you have. I hope that you have been so anxious to do all your work well that, as you look back, you can say, "My lessons and task were not wearisome. I have been happier in my work than anyone could be in listening to the best story that ever was told." Young people who require to be driven to their work do not find it a happiness. Nor will you be happy if you are idle: Satan always finds some mischief for idle hands and idle minds to do; and after mischief comes pain. If the year has not passed pleasantly, you may be sure there is something wrong. And if in the coming year your duties seem hard and burdensome, do go to Him who can turn duty into delight, and make burdens easy by taking the heaviest loads of them upon His own shoulder.

In another sense I hope you do not look back upon the past year as spent like "a tale that is told." It was well enough for the Arabs, after the toil of the day, to sit round the camp fire listening to a thrilling story which helped them to forget the day's cares and weariness. But what if they had listened to tale after tale till far on into the next day! What

about the progress of their journey, and the food and water which could be obtained only by moving on? So to have spent the hours needed for sleep and for travelling would have been their ruin. And just so is it in our journey through life. It is a fatal mistake to treat life as a plaything, or an amusement, to spend its years as if engaged with a story or a song. Do not allow a single precious day, much less a whole year, to pass away, leaving behind it no more permanent results than a tale that is told.—Rev. J. W. Miller in *Pres. Messenger*.

POOR "SOMEBODY ELSE!"

Perhaps we think we are pretty busy people, but we are idle compared with a poor slave, whose name is "Somebody Else." Whenever an awkward bit of work has to be done it is sure to be left for him.

At a meeting, if the speaker asks for a good collection, people hope that "Somebody Else" may be able to give more than they can afford to give at present.

If collecting cards or missionary-boxes are proposed, a hesitating voice says, "I am always glad to do what I can (&!) but as for collecting, I must leave that for 'Somebody Else.'"

If a bit of practical self-denial is proposed, there are excellent reasons given why it should refer solely to "Somebody Else."

Now and then when a meeting is arranged for, so many persons stay at home "to leave a seat for 'Somebody Else,'" that the poor fellow would need a thousand bodies to fill all these "reserved seats."

If a ringing call to go to the perishing heathen is heard, ten to one "Somebody Else" is put forward promptly as the very one for the work.

Just sit down for five minutes and think. Can you expect this unfortunate "Somebody Else" to do everything? How can he give and collect, and deny himself, and attend meetings, and go to the heathen, for the hundreds of people who pass their duties on to him? What is the use of piling up work like that? Isn't it rather a shame?

Now, no matter what others do, you let "Somebody Else" have a rest. Give him his well-earned holiday, and every time you feel inclined to leave anything for him to do *do it yourself*?—*Awake*.

A legend is current in Ceylon, that once on a time five hundred bats lived in a cave where two monks daily recited the Buddha's law. These bats gained such merit by simply hearing the sound of the words, that, when they died, they were all reborn as men, and ultimately as gods.