

Sunday-School Advocate.

TORONTO, JULY 23, 1864.

THE PRACTICAL JOKER.

WHAT is a practical joker?

A practical joker is an idle fellow, a player of tricks on his friends, a mischief-loving imp, a pest, a dangerous boy or girl, a—well, he is a silly, selfish fellow, who seeks sport in doing something to his friends which makes them feel awkward. The Corporal wouldn't have a practical joker in his company.

Yonder is a burly lad slyly creeping behind a quiet little boy who is on his way to school. Suddenly the big fellow snatches the little boy's cap from his head and twirls it over the fence into a clump of shrubs in front of a house. The small boy starts, fails to discover his cap, and bursts into tears over its loss. The big lad laughs and passes on. He is a practical joker.

Down on the beach is another lad who suddenly spies a group of little boys playing in a boat. He goes to the bow of the boat and slyly unties the anchor-rope, pushes the boat into deep water, and laughs to see the dismay of the little ones when they see themselves borne by the tide out into the bay. He, too, is a practical joker.

On board a British steamer is a man standing with a group of passengers on the quarter-deck. Seeing one of his friends about to sit down, he pulls away the chair. The gentleman falls down upon the deck, while the air rings with the laughter of his tormentor—the practical joker.

Now you know what a practical joker is, tell me how you like him, my children.

"Don't like him a bit." "He is a selfish fellow." "He isn't a Christian." "He deserves to be whipped."—Such are the replies which come to me from my readers. They are right. A practical joker is not a Christian, because Christians are kind. He is selfish, because he seeks to amuse himself by giving other persons pain. He does deserve to be whipped, because he has hardly sense enough to feel the force of any higher argument. I think, however, I could cure him without the whip. If I had all the girls in my Advocate family together I would form them into a vast circle, put the practical joker in the center, and say, "Now, girls, laugh at him for five whole minutes!" Wouldn't the girls laugh all the mischief out of him?

Don't be practical jokers, my children. It is small as well as selfish business. Any boy can whirl a little boy's cap over a fence, push a boat-load of children into deep water, or pull a chair away when one is about to sit down. Besides, practical joking is always painful, and sometimes a serious matter to those upon whom the joke is played. Think how badly that boy felt about his cap! What agony those poor children in the boat endured before they were picked up! They were actually borne out to sea, and were found the next day cuddled together at the bottom of the boat by some men in a fishing-smack. The man in the steamer broke his arm when he fell down, and was so excited lest his broken arm should hinder him from the pursuit of his business that he was thrown into a fever and died before the vessel reached Halifax. Hence you see that the practical joker may destroy life in his sport. His fun may be costly. His joke may be an arrow winged by the dark Death angel. I now wish to propose a resolution for you to adopt. Here it is:

Resolved, I will never play a practical joke upon any one.

(Signed)

Now if all my children will sign that resolution and stick to it the world will make the world's heap of sorrow smaller and its happiness heap larger. Who will sign it?

OUR CONVERSATION CORNER.

CHILDREN, your editor is to write for you four years longer—that is, if God shall spare his life and health so long. He is glad because he loves you very dearly, and would rather be your editor than wear a miter or a crown—the crown of life only excepted. Are you glad also? The editor thinks you are. He invites you to continue among his readers, and to make up your minds to follow the good advice he gives you. It is his wish to guide you to the blessed city of God.



Of course, Mr. Forrester, the Corporal, Q-in-the-corner, Aunt Julia, and all the rest of my shadows and helpers will remain in or about my editorial den. You will hear from them as heretofore. They will be glad to know that you welcome them also. They all join me in good wishes for your prosperity. Heaven bless you all!

Here is a letter from Q-in-the-corner. He says:

"MY DEAR CORPORAL,—Last Sunday I was at — Church, and was enjoying the sermon very much, but hearing a noise in the pew before me I looked for its cause, and saw a rosy-checked miss fast asleep. She had just pushed over a cricket with her foot, but she slept on as though she was one of the famous seven sleepers. I confess that I lost the rest of the sermon through looking at her. I felt some curiosity about what she would say of the sermon to her parents. So after service I followed her home. 'Well, Anna, dear, how did you like the sermon this morning?' said her mother as soon as her daughter had taken off her things.

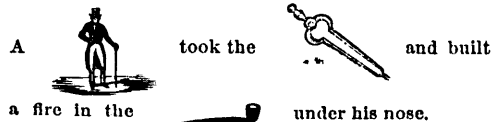
"Very much indeed," replied Anna. "It was a beautiful sermon. Mr. S. talked sweetly about Saul and David, Timothy and Paul, and other famous people."

"Now, corporal, there was not a word in the sermon about those persons, and it was clear to me that Anna knew no more of what the preacher did say than did King Bomba in Africa. Anna made that up to hide the truth that she had slept all through sermon time. What do you think of her, sir?"

"What do I think of Anna, eh?" replies the Corporal sharply, "I think she is like a bad nut or a worm-eaten apple. She is a cheat. I think she has no respect for God, for her parents, or for herself. It is bad enough to sleep in church, but lying about the sermon afterward is worse still. I would as soon take a leper into my house as Anna into my company. If she does not repent she will never get into heaven, I'm sure. There is no gate to the celestial city big enough to admit a hypocrite."

The Corporal is hard on Anna, but she deserves it. Don't you think so, my children?

Here is a picture puzzle for my Try Company:



A sorrowful mother writes:

"I have three little daughters in heaven. I have no children left. My husband is away in the service of his country. I hope he will fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. My Emma had a very remarkable dream about two weeks before she was taken sick. She dreamed of starting for heaven and Satan stood up to resist her, but she told him to go away, she would go to Jesus. She thought she came to a river, and Jesus took her in his arms and carried her through, and Satan appeared again; but she resisted him, and Jesus told her she was one of his sweetest little lambs."

That was a curious dream for a child. May the Saviour who took the child to himself comfort the sorrowful mother!—JENNIE S., of —, says:

"I am not permitted to attend the Sabbath-school. I lie here in sight of the church, where I can see many others going, for which I feel very thankful. I love to see little children go to Sabbath-school. They always look so pleasant, don't they? Wouldn't it be nice if they would

be so all the time? I fear some don't. Last summer they carried me on my bed up to Sabbath-school and preaching. I was almost charmed just to hear so many sweet young voices mingled together, singing sweet praises to God. It was the first time I had been in the church for eighteen months. I have been afflicted several years. I have not walked a step since the 18th of last February two years. At times my sufferings are great. But I enjoy the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit. What a blessed thing religion is!"

Let the children mark well what Jennie says. The love of Jesus makes her happy though she is sick and full of pain. Could anything else do that? Let us all pray for Jennie S.—OLIN, of —, says:

"I send you fifteen cents to pay for your photograph, and my mother says I may put it in her album. I have gathered and pressed some wild flowers for you. There are a great many beautiful flowers in this region growing in the valley and upon the hills. Now, Mr. Corporal, my brother and I want to join your Try Company. We intend to try to be good boys and then we shall be good men. So, if you please, write down upon your list the names of Wilber L. and Olin M'Kendree Hunter."

The names are written, the photo sent, the flowers placed among my precious things. May the souls of these boys be as pure and beautiful as the flowers they send me!—Here is a line from H. S. P. giving Lollie's ideas about a picture of the cross boy which was in the Advocate some time ago. She says:

"We have a little Lollie, as we call her, twenty months old, who is learning to talk. She cannot put words together very correctly, though she speaks quite distinctly. She sat in my lap while I showed the picture to her little brother and talked to him about it, and she seemed as much interested as he did. Not long after, in the evening, some friends called, and the little girl was tired and unusually fretful, so I apologized for her by saying that she was not well and was having teeth. The next morning she took the Advocate and looked earnestly at the picture till her face was covered with scowls. She said without looking up from the paper, 'Boy coss, me coss!' and then with a droll, self-satisfied look that was ludicrous enough, she added, 'Boys teef (teeth) comin'—me teef comin'!' Mothers are very apt to explain a baby's bad conduct by saying that 'it is teething,' but I think it not common for babies to do it themselves."

"A teacher," writing from —, says:

"One of our little boys, eight years old, came down to his mother's room one evening before going to bed, and, putting his arms around her neck, said, 'Mother, I told sister she was a fool. I didn't mean to do it. I let my heart slip. I won't do so again.' Another little boy, three years old, one day before going to Sabbath-school for the first time was asked by his mother if he would read the Bible to his teacher. He said, 'No, I will read to God. God wants me to read to him.' The same little boy one day asked his mother if God kept dogs; and on another occasion wished to know if God would kiss him when he went to see him. Several of our scholars have spoke in regard to joining your Try Company, and I think before long they will make applications to that effect."

The little fellows spoken of in this letter appear to be quite original in their thoughts and views of things. Their spirit of inquiry is good, and when joined to wisdom, as it will be by and by, will lead them into the paths of knowledge, which, by the way, are very pleasant places, though some boys and girls don't think so. They will make good Try Company boys without mistake.—Here is a line from STELLA D., a six-year-old miss of —. She says:

"I read the Testament through before my birthday. May I join your Try Company? I will try to be a good girl. I love to go to Sabbath-school and love to read about Jesus, because he loved little children. We have a large Sabbath-school, and a good one, too. Our teacher is Miss Ella Hughes. I love her dearly. I have only missed two Sundays in a year. I have two little brothers, Henry and Johnny; but my little sister Celeste is dead. My Uncle Henry died last fall. He was a good man and loved God. When he was dying he said, 'Tell them at home that I died happy in Jesus.' I pray for my pa every day."

Blessings on your curly head and loving heart, my pretty Stella! May you shine a bright particular star in the crown of Jesus. The Corporal accepts you.—ADELBERT writes:

"We have no Sabbath school in winter, so you see we cannot get along without our little paper. Our dear mother has been an invalid for ten years. My oldest brother died one year ago. He was a dear, good brother."

I am very glad to know that the Advocate is a comfort to that invalid mother in the distant West as well as to her boys. I admit Adelbert and Edgar on condition that they be their mother's comforters and tear-preventers, which, I trust, every Canadian boy who reads my paper is purposed also to be.