

Of whom is this citizen a type? If the prodigal went to places in that far country, how was it that the citizen did not? That is hard to say, but there are men in society to-day who answer well to this type. What about the licensed hotel keepers who admittedly run a bad business, but never patronize their own bars. See the poor prodigals they get to work for them; some of them young men, from a "far away" country. These men will do any kind of work for board, old clothing and drinks. We know of wholesale liquor merchants who are "citizens" flourishing in splendid estate. See some of their servants! Quite a difference, isn't there?

Some fellows are slow to learn. The prodigal was one of them. He was, no doubt, warned of the folly of his course, but he knew more, in his own estimation, than seven men who could render a reason. Experience was a poor teacher. He was the poor fellow who tampering with the "questionable" escapes with only a burn. Some have never returned. The other day an old Class Leader and Sunday School Superintendent related to me the story of a young man who was Secretary in a Sunday school. He was a teetotaler. There came a chance to buy a share in a good business where they sold liquor as a "side show" for the accommodation of "thirsty" customers. The young man thought that wouldn't hurt him—he never drank. The partners put the teetotaler a young married man too—in charge of the whiskey. Inside of three years he was in a drunkard's grave.

God gives us a choice and he gives us rein. In the case of the lost sheep there is innocent, stupid, wandering away. In the case of the coin, it rolls, because it is let fall and can't be rolling—heredity perhaps. But in the case of the prodigal there is deliberate choice of the course away and there must be deliberate choice of return.

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The "Father" meets the returning son. He is still his son, and there is

nothing he longs for more than to see him who was "lost" to his home, and "dead" to its joys, coming back again.

The joy in finding the lost is strongly emphasized in this woeful chapter. Humanity is particularly susceptible to this emotion—no matter in what connection. How much more needing to see in the moral sphere? What treasure more to be rejoiced over than the finding of a lost soul. "There is joy in the presence of the angels," that is, in the Father, God himself, when the sons of men return to him. Heaven and earth are in accord in this.

Now how pleasantly we might end here! How pleasantly things might be in this world, in homes, in church, if—there we stop and sigh. If there were no ignorance, narrowness, selfishness, and such like; if there were no swelled heads, sore heads and deadheads in the church; if there were none needing to be kept in the moral sphere; how serenely our lives would move on! But the elder brother was there and his kind is still around. There would be no prodigals about at all if these men were in charge. The elder brother would never be troubled. He would have the Church all to himself if it were possible. We are thankful it isn't.

How shall we characterize the "elder brother." He is a mixture of strength and weakness, right and wrong, good and dross. He is a Christian, let us say, with a minimum of the Christian spirit. He is suffering from the disease of pious self-satisfaction. The general interpretation makes him a type of the Pharisee.

He is right possibly in thinking that too much could be made of prodigals. In this respect he might have trusted his father's judgment, but of course he wasn't perfect any more than the rest of us. There is often praise given unduly to men who have been notorious prodigals and are now reformed and perhaps penitent. They entertain popular audiences with gruesome tales of life in "Sodom." Such subjects are paraded as "From Bar-room to Pulpit," "Prize Fighter to Evangelist," "Gambler Saved," etc. All this is matter to rejoice over surely, but we may question the right or propriety of hawking this before a public audience. If prodigals are to be made into heroes, it puts a premium on sin. Sin is dangerous and shameful. The bird with the broken pinion, they say, cannot soar as high again. Years spent in sin are lost years, wasted, broken years.

But when prodigals do return men should rejoice. It is instinctive to rejoice over rescues. The piety that cannot rejoice over a penitent sinner is not quite Christian. Away with crabbed, sour, elder brother religion watching narrowly, and judging harshly of the misdeeds of others, as if they were guiltless themselves. The elder brother was unbrotherly. What greater offence in the world than that? He was sulky and peevish, unsympathetic and uncharitable. He needed repentance. We all do.

One day little Willie's mother missed him for some time, and when he reappeared she asked: "Where have you been, my pet?"

"Playing postman," replied the "pet."

"I gave letters to all the houses in our road—real letters, too."

"Where on earth did you get them?" questioned his mother, in amusement, which changed to horror when he answered:

"They were those old ones in your wardrobe drawer, tied up with ribbon."—*Ladies' Home Journal.*

About Bowmanville—and You

The Bowmanville Statesman contained recently an account of a social evening given by the Epworth League to the Old Folk of the Church. It is said that there are some 140 persons seventy years of age or over in the Bowmanville Methodist congregation. Many of these may be quite unable to be present regularly at service, but a large proportion could more frequently attend, if some means of conveying them to the church were provided. Knowing this, the League enlisted the assistance of friends owning autos, and they cheerfully gave their services. In this way, a good number of the old people were brought to the meeting, and the evening was apparently a very happy one. An appetizing tea was served, and, after a social half-hour, a varied programme was given. The numbers were most enjoyable throughout. A hearty vote of thanks was presented to the League by the elders, and "God bless the tie that binds" fittingly expressed the spirit and feeling of the whole company.

As we read this item, two things were impressed on our mind: (1) The young people of every Methodist congregation might work their affectionate regard and consideration for the older members by such an evening occasionally, and (2) the Epworth Leagues do not make enough of the local press. Invariably in each issue of the *Statesman* some paragraph of interest in relation to the League life and work is found. We do not believe that the Church should use the local papers for free advertising, when money is involved in their gatherings, but our knowledge of many local editors leads us to believe that there is a willingness in their hearts and a readiness in their hands to sympathize with and give publicity to every good work in which either young or old may engage. See if your editor would not gladly welcome lively news of your League. Have something worth reporting, then see that it is reported. The Editor will do the rest.

A Dump Boy Who Saved Sixty

Fred Evans was a boy who worked in the dump in an Illinois coal mine. One day there was a cave-in, and the earth and coal in settling imprisoned sixty men. The foreman of the rescuing party saw the small opening that the cave-in had left between the places where these men stood and the outer world, and he spoke to this boy to know if he would dare to help them. "The vein, and in and out for you to crawl through," he said, "and to drag a hollow pipe after you. You'll have to be mighty careful, or the coal will settle and crush your life out. But if you can get it through to them, then we can pump air enough in to keep them alive till we can dig them out. Are you willing to try it?"

All Fred answered was, "I'll try my best."

It was a long crawl, and many a time it stopped, and those outside gave up hope, but at last there was a faint call through it that told them he was there; they began pumping air and water and milk through the pipe, and kept it up for a week, when Fred and the whole sixty were safely brought out and given back to their families. He was only a boy, but these true stories of plucky boys and their heroism and devotion show that not only a prophet, but common, every-day people may hear the Lord's call to needed work; and that the answer reveals the kind of boy or girl or man or woman it is that hears it.—*The Heidelberg Teacher.*