

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

THE LITTLE BOOK.

A DEAR friend of mine, whose husband had occasion to make a business trip to Manitoba, decided almost at the last moment to accompany him, thinking it would be a rare opportunity to see that new country, and to visit some relatives from whom she had been separated for years.

She had one child, a handsome boy about seven years old. The little fellow had often spent a day at our house with his mother, and had always behaved so well we had become very fond of him.

As soon as I heard that his parents proposed a journey, I petitioned to have Freddie left with me, promising to take the very best care of him. At first neither Mr. nor Mrs. Mason would listen to the proposal; they had expected, of course, to take their child with them; his mother particularly felt that she could scarcely live without her "precious boy," even for a few weeks. But after a good deal of talking and reasoning about the matter, they both concluded, as they were going to make such a hurried trip, it would be easier for them and better for Freddie, to leave him at home. So one bright morning in May, Freddie and I accompanied them to the city and bade them "good bye" at the depot. The poor boy's eyes were full of tears, and his usually bright face wore a very sad expression as he stood upon the platform gazing after the train that was bearing his father and mother, swift as lightning, away from him.

Feeling sorry for the little fellow, I tried to cheer him up, and proposed that instead of returning at once to our home in the country we should take a drive about University Park, and spend a few hours there. That was delightful. The tears were dried at once, and Freddie was all eagerness and animation.

It was nearly dark when we reached home, and very soon after supper, the tired sleepy little boy begged to go to bed. Taking him by the hand I led him to the cozy little room we had prepared for him, and after reading to him a few verses from the Bible, as his mamma was in the habit of doing, and hearing him say his prayers, I left him for the night, feeling pretty sure he would not lie awake long to think about either his trouble or his pleasure.

The next morning Freddie was not willing to rise when he was called; so knowing how much he needed rest, I allowed him to lie still and take an extra nap. After eating his late breakfast he wandered about the house and grounds, visited the stable, brought in the eggs, and made himself quiet at home. Very naturally he had no appetite for our early dinner, but before supper time he was so hungry he could not wait another moment for something to eat.

I felt that the first day had scarcely realized my expectations—"one late had made two lates," and sent everything crooked; but I hoped for a better start the next morning, and then everything would go smoothly and

systematically. I found, however, that though Freddie was not the least tired, he did love to be lazy in the morning, and I had to be very decided before I could get him to rise and get ready for breakfast.

Mr. Knight had just bought a new horse, and having reason to believe that the animal was not very gentle, he told Freddie at the table not to go near the horse, lest he should get hurt. During the morning the horse was near the house, "tethered" to a tree—that is, tied with a rope long enough to admit of his moving about and eating grass within a certain space, but preventing him from going far enough to do any harm. Freddie seemed very much interested in the horse's movements, and every little while came into the sitting room to ask some question about him.

When Mr. Knight came to dinner he enquired if any one knew how "Dandy" had become loose. He had found the rope cut or broken, and the horse trampling down some choice plants.

No one knew anything about it; all were equally surprised and sorry for the mischief he had done.

The next day a large branch was broken off an apple tree—it had hung low and we concluded some one might have brushed against it carelessly in passing and broken it. It was not until several days had passed, each bringing some mystery of the kind, that we began to suspect our little visitor. He had such a good, honest face and frank manner that we hated to think he could be mischievous and deceitful.

At last, however, I determined to find out, and taking him to his room I sat down by the window and had him stand before me.

"Now Freddie," I said, "I am going to ask you a question, and I want you to answer me truthfully. Did you cut the rope the day the horse was tied to the tree?"

Freddie coloured deeply at first and hung his head, but recovering almost immediately he looked up brightly and asked:

"What makes you think I did?"

"I did not say I do think so," I replied; but you have not answered my question. Did you cut the rope?"

A little hesitation and Freddie inquired, with rather less assurance in his tone:

"Do you think Mr. Knight would care much if I did?"

"Answer my question first, Freddie," I urged; "did you cut the rope or did you not?"

Then came the confession.

"Yes, ma'am, I did. I found a knife on the piazza, and I thought I would like to see how 'Dandy' would act if he had his own way."

I went on with my questioning:

"Did you break the limb off the apple tree, too, Freddie?"

"Maybe I did," he replied. "I was swinging on it one day, and heard something crack. I was in a hurry and did not wait to see what it was."

O how sorry and disappointed I was! I talked very seriously to the little boy, trying to

show him how wicked such behaviour was, and finally asked him if he did not think his parents would punish him if they knew about it.

"Well," he replied, after a little, "papa might punish me, but then mamma would beg off for me and he would soon stop."

I thought I could easily understand to what such discipline led, and did not wonder so much that my little friend failed to improve upon acquaintance.

"Freddie," I went on to say, "you deserve to be punished very severely. I thought you were a little boy I could love and trust, but you have deceived me. You came here to make a visit, and I want to treat you well all the time you stay. I am not going to punish you once while you are here, but I will tell you what I am going to do. Here is a little book," drawing a small blank book and pencil from my pocket "in which I shall write down every night all the naughty things I have known you to do or say during the day, and when your parents return I intend to hand it to your father, and let him see whether his little son deserves the nice presents he has brought him."

"Will you put in about the horse?" he asked.

"Certainly," I said commencing to write, that goes down first, and I want you to remember, my dear Freddie, that this is not the only book in which an account is being kept. God sees and knows all we do and say, and has it all written down in His book. And when he calls us from this world we will have to stand before Him as you stand before me now, and answer for our wicked words and actions."

"Grown people and all?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Freddie, all of us, old and young. Ought not this to make us very, very careful?"

"Yes, ma'am, indeed it ought," he answered, while a very serious look came over the little face. "I am sure every time I go to do anything naughty now I shall think about the two books, but I'm most afraid of God's book. Papa will be so glad to see me when he comes home that he won't be very angry, but I should not like to offend God, because the Bible says, 'He will by no means clear the guilty.' Mamma taught me that one night, and told me what it means, but I had forgotten all about it. O my, I must not forget God's book, anyway." The little book proved a great help both to Freddie and myself. Every night he had to see how much the account had grown, and every night he asked God to forgive his sins and "rub them out of His book."

May this story of the little book make us all more watchful and prayerful. None of us can have the least idea how fast our sins count up until we deal faithfully with ourselves and take impartial note of our shortcomings. Let us every night review the conduct of the day, and like Freddie, seek earnestly to have "our iniquities blotted out."

RELIGION is the homage which the intellect pays to the feelings.