OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

(By an Occasional Contributor.)

HEROISM. — On the Western coast of California stood a small cottage inhabited by a fisherman and his family, a wife and two children. The cottage was surrounded by a pretty garden and beyond, at one side, an orchard, and at the other undulating fields, while in front lay the broad expanse of the Pacific with its mighty billows, as far as the eye could reach.

Peace and happiness reigned in this humble dwelling. Wealth was not here with her many cares and anxieties, but contentment, which is far more precious. The good fisherman and his wife were resigned to the will of God, and endeavored to live as comfortably as their means would allow. The greater part of the fisherman's time was employed in fishing, by which means he and his family chiefly subsisted; also by a salary derived from the care of a lighthouse that stood at some little distance out into the ocean.

His wife occupied herself in her household duties and in the care of her two children, a bright boy of twelve and a little girl of five, named respectively Alec and Eva. Eva was a dear little mite delighting the heart of all who approached her, by her graceful, charming ways; but Alec was a sturdy lad, usually the head of his class at echool, and always eager, among his playmates, to uphold everything noble and manly and honest. He frequently accompanied his father to the lighthouse, usually when the sea was calm, but in tempests he would watch from the window of the cottage till his father had returned. He also had accompanied his father on many of his fishing expeditions; thus had he learned all about the care of the lighthouse and the managing of boats and crafts, a knowledge which served him in good stead in the hour of danger and emergency.

One day his father having gone out on a fishing cruise, stayed later than usual, the fishing being much better than it had been for several days. In fact so busy was he hauling in his nets of fish that he did not notice the wind change and the sky prepare for a storm. When he did notice, he endeavored to hasten to shore, but it was too late; the wind began to blow a fearful gale in the opposite direction, so instead of coming to shore he was driven still farther out to sea. It was an awful tempest; the sky was dark with overhanging clouds, the lightning rent the air, the thunder roared with terrific noise. It was all he and his comrade could do to keep the craft from capsizing; many a time, when some fearful billow swept over her, she would plunge and quiver as though about to fall tp pieces. It was evident that the storm would last for some time and that it would be impossible to return to land until it had abated. As these facts dawned on the fisherman, a terrible fear filled him that there would be no light in the lighthouse that night, and in such a storm what might not happen! Vessels would be along before morning, and with nothing to warn them off the awful reefs that lay in those parts, some horrible wrecks might happen. His blood ran cold at the thought, but what to do?

In the meantime little Alec and his mother and sister watched the storm from the window, a terrible anxiety in their hearts. They feared for the fisherman's safety, but they feared also for the other vessels that might pass that way, with nothing to warn them off; might wreck on the reefs and rocks in that neighborhood. Taking up the weekly paper and glancing at the marine news, the mother perceived that two vessels, from the time they had left their ports, should be due shortly, perhaps before morning. The poor woman prayed with a degree of fervor not to be wondered at considering her piety and her habitual devotion to Our Lady of Help, the patroness of mariners. An inspiration came to Alex that he might light that lamp: he could not bear to think that anything awful might happen through the neglect of that duty. His father not being home it remained for him to do it. The fearful sound of vessels striking on the rocks, and the cries of drowning people seemed to strike on his ears above the din of the storm. He could stand it no longer. Snatching up his cap, and kissing his mother a hasty good-bye, he said: "Don't be uneasy, mother, if I do not return before morning," and before she had time to speak, or realize what he was about, he was off.

The shallop was in the boathouse: if only he could get her on the water and steer her, all would be well, as the wind was blowing in the direction of the lighthouse. Soon the shallop was out, rocking on the mountain-like billows, now down in some awful hollow, now on the crest of the wave: sometimes the water would dash over, almost submerging her, drenching Alex, and pretty nigh sweeping him overboard, but he hung on to the helm with determination and skill far beyond his years, steering as well as he could for the lighthouse. The next problem was to approach the lighthouse without being dashed to pieces against the rocks. He had watched his father, from the window in times of storm, and endeavored to do likewise, but trusting more to God than in his own ability. After having recited a prayer to the Blessed Lady of Help, the never failing star of the ocean, he managed, after much difficulty, to land in safety.

A long sigh of relief escaped him; he wept for very joy, and throwing himself on his knees, thanked God. He had now only to light the lamp and all would be well, he hoped. He was drenched to the skin with the salt spray, and was shivering, but he did not mind. With a light heart he mounted the many flights of stairs that led to the tower, and could almost have shouted for joy as the rays of light flashed out over the sea.

The darkness of night soon settled all around. The storm continued to rage with unabated fury. Alec had a pretty lonely watch all night in that wind-shaken tower; now and again he would get snatches of sleep, but only to rouse with a start from some awful dream, in which the wrecking of ships and the awful shrieks and wailings of the drowning were mingled with the howlings of the storm.

But how fared it with the father, out on that storm-tossed ocean? all through that fearful night? At first his anxiety about the lighthouse gave place to joy, as he saw the light flash from the tower; he could not conceive who had rendered him that service, who had risked his precious life for the welfare of others; for to anyone unaccustomed, and in such a storm, it was a very risky task.

His mind at rest on that score, he had all he could do to keep his own craft from perishing either against the rocks, or capsizing in the awful ocean. All around him was as black as ink, the flashes of lightning that came ever and anon, revealing the awful blackness of the sky, and the fearful heaving of the ocean, but intensified the darkness. Thus the night passed.

With the glimmering of the dawn the tempest somewhat abated, the sea grew a little calmer, and the fisherman was able to steer for land.

On arriving at the cottage, where his wife had spent the night by the window in prayer and anxiety, what was his astonishment to find that it was his own little Alec who had braved the tempest to light the tower. After resting a little, during which time the storm still abated, he hastened to his craft, thence to the lighthouse to bring home the little hero. He clasped the wet boy in his arms, his heart thrilling with pride and joy. He brought him home, where his mother had a good hot breakfast awaiting for him.

In a very short time all the people in the neighboring town had heard of his bravery. They took up a collection among them, amounting to quite a few hundred dollars. All this coming to the ears of a sea captain who had just put into anchor, made him declare, rather vehemently, that that boy had saved the lives of every one on his ship; that he was well aware of the dangerous reef through which he had passed, and without the warning of the lighthouse they would surely have perished.

Another collection was taken up among the passengers, and the whole, amounting to four thousand dollars, was presented to Alec's father, for his little boy.

Alec was overwhelmed when he heard of all this; he declared he had done nothing more than his duty, and couldn't see what they were making such a fuss about. However, as it had long been his desire to attend college, he was delighted that now they would have money enough to pay his expenses there; so off to college he went.

In twelve more years he was ordained priest, and a few years later was consecrated Bishop and appointed to the See of San Francisco, where for many years he continued to labor in the vineyard of the Lord, with the same intrepidity that marked his character as a boy.—Clara Beatrice Senecal, St. John's, P.Q.

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Technical Education.

Speaking at the closing session of the Longford Centre of technical instruction, the Most Rev. Dr. Hoare, Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, said that the object of this technical movement in Ireland was to make Irish people happy and contented, to give them the means of living in their own land in decency and comfort, so that not only would the farmer live and thrive as he was promised long ago, but also the horny-handed workers in the towns, the unskilled as well as the skilled laborer. But, asked His Lordship, is this happy time to come, aor are we within reasonable distance of the Millennium? Without adopting an unreasonable pessimism, I think these questions should be answered in the negative. I see no sign of the sunburst. Our blood is still flowing in the emigration of our young men and women, and every bad winter like that just passing by the main population of our towns find themselves on the borderland of starvation.

What have you done this four years with the Department's money and the ratepayers' money? Have you kept the people at home, or is not emigration still on the increase? Have you made it unnecessary ever again to appeal to the greater Ireland for alms? Has every Irishman to-day an honest way of living at home? The answers to such questions reveal in my mind the failure of all our efforts I have serious doubts that we may be squandering the money that is so badly wanted. The itinerant reaching is not a success. If it is doing any good at all, that good will appear only after an age, perhaps a geological age. But in our case time is of the essence of our achievement.

Now I admit all this is in marked contrast with the expert pronouncement of Sir Horace Plunkett's "Ireland in the New Century." In this book we see an author discoursing on every subject from "the Cedar of Lebanus to the hyssop that groweth out of the wall," condemning every institution—religious, political, social and moral—that exists amongst us; and telling us in substance that his technical system is going to give us "constructive thought,' to "upbuild the National life," "to be a strengthening influence on our moral fibre." Gentlemen, where does all this come in? Then everything is wrong, and out of date, worthy of an old Syrian civilization, save the author and his Technical Department. The web of this remarkable production is: Thank God I am not like the rest of men; and the woof is: I alone did it. The Protestants are wrong; they are bigotted; the Catholics, especially the priests, are wrong, because their religion is not economical and priests have not effectually prevented drunkenness; the English were wrong, they were never able to read the Irish mind; the Irish are wrong, they are wanting in character, that is courage, confidence, initiative, moral fibre; and so on over the whole gamut. Everyone has erred but the Recess Committee, the Department, and, of course, the genius loci, and the Arbiter Elegantiarum, Sir Horace Plunkett.

Amongst other things, he charges the poor priests with importing works of art for their churches, and he forgets that he himself goes to Albemarle Street for a publisher of his book. He accuses them, like the two Apostates, of spending too much money on our churches. Has anyone been made poor in Longford after building the Cathedral? Does the Cathedral now prevent people from being industrious and economic? Why the priests of this diocese are the only patrons of education we have amongst us. They give out of their small incomes £110 a year for prizes and burses. Since I have come to Longford they gave me for this purpose £1000. And this was not given for their own Order, for educating priests, but to clever boys, irrespective of their future life. I suppose the same occurs in every part of Ireland.

A MEMORIAL.

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