

CHILDREN AND FORBID THEM NOT TO COME

PEACE ON EARTH

CANADA

GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN

SUPPER · LITTLE

UNTIL · MORN

SUNDAY SCHOOL ADVOCATE

VOLUME XI.—NUMBER 24.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1866.

WHOLE NUMBER 264.



For the Sunday School Advocate.

First Steps.

BY FRANCIS FORRESTER, ESQ.

BABY is learning to walk. Brother TIM is saying, "Don't be afraid, NELL;" and sister CORA adds, "Come, Nell, I'll catch you." Thus encouraged, fat little Nell takes her first step. She is not quite certain she can keep on her feet, but she is trying, and, on the whole, does pretty well—as well as you and I did, Master SPRUCE, when we took our first lesson in walking, so you needn't laugh at her one bit.

First steps! Did you ever think what important

things they are? You know TOM STANLEY, don't you? You call him "bandy legs" because his legs are bent out like bows. Do you know why they are bent in that manner? It is because he was made to take his first steps too early. His mother was in a hurry to see him walk, and she put him on his feet too soon. He learned to walk very early, but it was at the price of spoiling his legs for life. So you see that Tom's first steps were costly ones for him.

First steps! You don't know WILLIAM — ? Of course you don't. No matter. He took a first step one day which cost him much pain. He was about ten years old, and was considered quite a fair boy. He was going to school on a bright

summer's morning, when the thought popped into his head that it would be nice to go a little out of his way to look at some men working in a field.

William's conscience tried to drive the naughty little thought out of his head by saying, "No, no, you ought not to stop. You ought to go straight to school."

But the naughty thought was as nimble as a flea, and it kept leaping about William's brain until it finally hopped right down into his heart. It was Willie's master then, and it made him turn aside from the road and walk into the field. These were *first steps in a wrong direction.*

"Pooh! That wasn't doing anything very bad," you say. Wasn't it? Wasn't it an *act of disobedience* to his mother, who had just said to him, "Go straight to school, Willie?" And wasn't disobedience to his mother a sin against God? Don't tell me it wasn't doing anything very bad. Shame on you! Moreover, it was a first step. Mark what came of it!

William ran into the field and watched the men. In a little while he began to gather the wild flowers which grew around. Then the naughty thought roused itself and swelled larger, and said, "This is better than being shut up in the hot school-house." "So it is," shouted William, "and I won't go this morning, whip me if I do." Wasn't it much to take those first steps? You see how they led William to the second step—to playing truant. Wasn't that *much?*

But that was not all. A sudden but heavy shower came and wet the boy to the skin. "Served him right!" you say. No doubt it did. But it put him into a dilemma. He dared not go home or to school, so he stayed in the open air all day to dry himself. At night he went home, and told a lie or two to account for the dampness of his clothing.

The next day his head ached, and he was allowed to stay at home. In the evening his teacher called to learn the cause of his two days' absence. That brought the ugly story of his truancy to light, and also brought him a sound flogging from his father's hands. William's first steps were getting to be costly, weren't they? But worse things were yet to come.

The next day he was quite sick. His wetting had given him a cold which now became a rheumatic fever. Then followed the doctor, boluses, pains, aches, and groans for many days. At last the fever left him, and he left his bed; but he was partially deaf, and had pains which trouble him even now that he is an old man. Didn't his *first steps* cost him a pretty big price?

Beware then, my children, of first steps! Don't