

Missionary Mud Pies

(By Marjorie S. Henry, in 'Children's Work for Children'.)

'Steady, now, boys!'

'Here she comes!'

'Be careful at the turn!'

Mrs. Shepherd smiled to herself over her sewing as she listened to the chorus of boyish voices, and the tramp of many feet up and down her garret stairs. All that Saturday morning the noise of their hammering and sawing floated down to her, and now and then her opinion had been asked as to the relative merits of 'two-inch' and 'three-inch' boards, brads or screws, so she was perfectly aware as to what contrivance was bumping so energetically down her back staircase, and called out pleasantly, 'Bring it into the sitting-room, Arthur, if you can get through the hall without scratching the paper. There! that is nicely done. Sit down, all of you, and let me admire while James brings up a plate of fresh cookies.'

On the carpet six boys deposited the result of their morning's labor: a wooden tray ('3 x 3,' explained Dixon Lewis scientifically) completely covered with white oil-cloth, neatly tacked to fit perfectly even to the little edge that served as a railing for the tray.

'The nails hardly show after all, do they, mother? and didn't Jack cover the corners well? You see we can use it over and over, for the mud will wash off the oil-cloth, and it'll be as good as new every time. Hurry up, boys, with your cookies; we must get around to the chapel before dinner,' exclaimed Will Murphy; and the procession started down the sunny street, their burden attracting much attention from the passers-by.

'Yes, it is a mission-band concern, and that's all we can tell about it now; but if you come to the monthly concert next Wednesday, you shall see it then,' answered Jack Shepherd to all inquiries.

The next few days were busy ones to the boys' band. There were frequent trips to and from the chapel, mysterious purchases at the store, and much whispering and consultation, that aroused the curiosity of all without the limits of the new plan.

'How ever blue zephyr can have to do with mission work I don't see!' exclaimed Jennie Lewis as she listened to Dixon's request for one of his mother's skeins.

'Of course you don't; girls are not expected to. Why the most of our new plan is just mud! What do you think of that? It takes the boys, Jennie Lewis, to find use for everything,' he added as he ran off laughing, leaving his sister still more mystified.

Curiosity and interest in the boys' band filled every seat in the lecture-room that November evening. Dr. Elliott had mentioned in the pulpit on Sabbath that he would be helped in the monthly concert exercises by members of the boys' band; so after his opening address on South America, the subject for the month, a large easel was carried on to the platform, and four boys followed with the 'mud map,' which they placed on the easel in full view of the entire audience. Before their surprised eyes stood a complete outline of the country in question—hills, valleys, rivers and mountains—modelled in brown clay, a wonderful map indeed! But we will let the boys tell of it as they did that night.

'In the first place,' began Tom Shepherd, as he stood, pointer in hand, at one end of the platform, 'I must tell you how we make a "mud map." We buy the clay, and this you can get at any pottery. It costs very little, and lasts a long time. We

then trace the outline of the map we are to make in crayon on the white cloth, and fill in this outline with the clay, which must be wet to mould easily into shape. It dries in the form of the mountains or valleys, and after we are through for one month we scrape it up carefully and use it again in just the same way.'

'The boys like to shape the country,' went on Lewis Dale, 'poking up the mountains and tipping the tops with flour to make them look like snow. We had lots of that to do in South America. Just look at the Andes! Aren't they white? At first we didn't know what to do with the volcanoes, but now we put in a little cotton at the top, and it looks exactly like smoke. Tell about the river and lakes, Will.'

'The rivers—see! there is the Amazon, for instance—are made of blue worsted, and the lakes in silver paper, and the outline of the seas is done in colored crayon, blue, of course, and it serves as a good background for the map.'

'I'll show you how we mark the cities,' said Jack Shepherd. 'That white button is Rio Janeiro, and that next one is Sao Paulo. Of course the map committee prepares all this beforehand. And we study over it all the month.'

'You see,' continued Carl Esterbrook, 'we learn all we can about the places. For instance, there is Rio Janeiro (Will pointed it out); we went all around that city, with pictures and maps of course, I mean, saw all the shipping lying in the beautiful harbor, and took a sail around the bay; and—yes! we stopped at our own mission church with its two hundred members—there is the number, two hundred in red crayon, you see!'

'And then we went on to Sao Paulo, where our missionaries are working in schools for girls and for young men. There was one thing that pleased us all at Sao Paulo. The Brazilian girls there have a mission band, and as they learn about Jesus they try to tell others. Wouldn't it be funny to be a missionary in your own country?'

'At Sao Paulo,' said John Malin, 'there is a paper published. Oh, there was so much to talk of in Brazil! Do you see that little blue flag near Rio Janeiro? I will tell you what it means. We had a hard time to get it to stand straight, and Mr. Brown said it was like the work it signified—hard to plant but sure to stand. It means that Calvin (our real Presbyterian Calvin) sent missionaries in 1555 (there's the date!) to Brazil. So if the Presbyterian Church don't do their best there, we will not be following our leader.'

'We could hardly leave Brazil,' said Tom, taking up the pointer. 'See! there is Brotas, where one priest decided to work for Jesus only, and became a Protestant. He has led so many of his people to the true cross—'

'I will leave Brazil,' Jack Shepherd continued, 'and tell about Bogota, where Mr. Pratt lived and labored so faithfully. One of the boys' mothers had a "fern motto" from Bogota. Perhaps you have not heard of those "fern mottoes." Then, indeed, you must ask and hear how even in that distant land there are workers for Jesus. If we only had time to tell you everything we would go with our dear missionaries on their long trips over the Andes mountains, or down to Chili, and show you Valparaiso and Santiago, with their streets lighted with electric light, their telegraphs and telephones. Oh, indeed, we forgot it was a heathen land until we tried to have a quiet Sunday there, and then we found that Jesus has no place in that lovely country. All

the stores and daily work go on the same, and only at our little mission church could we feel at home.'

'Yes,' continued Dixon, 'and we did find in one corner of the city a real "Y. M. C. A.," with almost a hundred members. Oh, it made us so glad to see it there. These numbers on the sides of the map in crayon of different colors mean the population of South America, the number of square miles, and lots of other things.'

'I expect you all wonder,' said Will, 'what the little candles stuck in the map at the mission stations mean. Light them up, boys. They are to show how mission stations are shining in that dark dark land for Jesus, and we boys are glad, very glad, to see them shine, for we know that even one band has a share in our shining.'

When the 'mud map' was lighted by the little candles that shed their faint rays over hill and valley, Dr. Elliott came to the front of the platform and said, in his own pleasant way, 'Dear friends, sometimes I think we older ones rather hold back from the new ideas of teaching children in mission bands, and we seem to think the work of foreign missions is losing its dignity by being brought to the level of childish minds. To-night I can truthfully say that from this little object lesson that these dear boys have given us, I can go away knowing better the situation of mission stations in South America, grasping more fully the work to be done, and feeling, as I watch the little candles flicker and glow, what it is to be shining for Jesus in a dark place. If this is mission work brought to the children, then let us be in the way as it passes by, and catch the simple truths which such object lessons teach to young and old.'

'There, Jennie Lewis, I guess you won't laugh at our "mud pies" again, will you?' asked Dixon as they talked it over in mother's room after the meeting.

'Well, it was pretty good,' conceded Jennie, with a shake of her curls. 'But we girls might have—'

'Just hear her, mother!' exclaimed Dixon. 'Well, try it; it's a free plan. Let's see what you girls can do.'

A Legend.

There has come to my mind a legend, a thing I had half-forgot,
And whether I read it or dreamed it, ah,
well, it matters not.
It is said that in heaven at twilight a great
bell softly swings,
And man may listen and hearken to the
wonderful music that rings,
If he puts from his heart's inner chamber
all the passion, pain and strife,
Heartaches and weary longings that throbb
in the pulses of life—
If he thrusts from his soul all hatred, all
thoughts of wicked things,
He can hear in the holy twilight how the
bell of the angels rings.
And I think there is in this legend, if we
open our eyes to see,
Somewhat of an inner meaning, my friend,
to you and me;
Let us look in our hearts, and question, 'Can
pure thought enter in
To a soul if it be already the dwelling of
thoughts of sin?'
So, then, let us ponder a little; let us look
in our hearts, and see
If the twilight bell of the angels could ring
for you and me.

God's grace is great, but it is not able
to do much for the man who is not willing
to undertake to be a Christian more
than an hour or two a week.—Ram's Horn.