

Our Young Folks.

AN ACROSTIC.

BY R. A. T., TORONTO.

Father, to us Thy Spirit give,
As for Thee we try to live,
Teach us what to do and say,
How to serve Thee every day,
Every moment, every hour,
Resting in thy love and power.

GOLDEN GRAIN BIBLE READINGS.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

THE GODLY MAN'S LOOKOUT FOR THE FUTURE.

He is confident as to the final issue, Phil. i. 6.
He rejoices in prospect of a crown, 2 Tim. iv. 8.
Until that time he expects deliverance, 2 Tim. iv. 18.
He is promised an all-helpful presence, Heb. xiii. 5, 6.
He has held out to his heart and hand :
God's grace, 2 Cor. xii. 19 ; 2 Cor. ix. 8.
Daily strength, Deut. xxiii. 25.
Everlasting upholding arms, Deut. xxiii. 27.
Everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3 ; Rev. iii. 9.
A covenant of peace that shall never be broken, Isa. liv. 10.
A mercy that shall never depart from him, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.
Peace to keep his heart in quietness, Phil. iv. 6, 7.
A joy that is perennial and satisfying, Ps. xliii. 4.
A hope that cannot perish, 1 Tim. i. 1 ; Ps. lxxi. 25.
He shall reap with joy the harvest he put in here, Ps. cxvii. 5.
He shall come home with joy, Isa. li. 11.
He expects Christ's coming, Rev. xxii. 7, 12, 20 ; Titus ii. 13.

WHO BUILT THE HOUSE?

The house was in a pond. People passed along the road in full sight of it, but never saw it. Boys came and caught frogs and chased turtles and captured blood-suckers, but did not notice it. In plain sight it was not twenty feet from the shore. The roof was covered with a thatch of rushes to keep out the rain. Within there was one room, a cosy bed-room, with a bed of dried grass as soft as down. The walls were of mud. There were no pictures hanging on them, nor were there stove, chair, table or dish in the mansion. There were no windows ; there was no chimney ; and the door, the only door, was under water.

This house had a very wet cellar ; in fact, it was always full of water.

The ducks often swam close to the house, plunging their broad bills deep into the mud, and sometimes diving out of sight, but they never tried to enter. The frogs sat on the large lily leaves near by and croaked long and loud, but not one went in. The turtles sometimes climbed to the roof to sun themselves, but they never went inside. The meadow mice had little houses of their own, and laid no claim to this. No one of these pond people claimed it. Who then was the owner? Who built the house.

One day one of the boys discovered the house. At first he thought it was an old bushel basket turned upside down, but as he looked more carefully he saw that something must have built it right where it was. He wondered when it was done and who did it. He lived close to the pond, and could see the whole of it from his chamber window, but he had never seen this building before. Almost every day after school he played in the old field near the pond, and yet he had never noticed the building. He had made up his mind to examine it carefully, and, if possible, solve the mystery that surrounded it.

The mud and water were so deep that he dared not wade out ; and he had no boat. How should he reach the little mud island, on the edge of which it stood? After thinking some time, he went to the lumber pile and took several boards and brought them to the shore. These he laid across the tussocks of pond grass until he had a bridge leading right up to the curious building. It was a very narrow and exceedingly shaky bridge. It bent and tipped as the boy stepped upon it. In his hand he held a long stick, which he thrust down into the mud to steady himself. In this way he sidled along, carefully balancing, step by step, until he was almost there. Once he stuck the stick so far down that he had to give quite a hard pull in drawing it out, and when it did come he almost tipped over backward.

Step by step he moved slowly on, and at last reached the house. Once there he examined it with a great deal of wonder. It was so strongly made, so nicely thatched, so perfectly rounded ! With a stick he rapped gently on the roof. There was a rustle, a plunge, and something darted through the water, and was gone. So quick and unexpected were the motions, that the boy could not decide whether it was a fish or an animal. As he examined the dwelling, he saw leading from the under-water door a pathway in the soft mud, on the bottom of the pond. Following it with his eyes, he noticed that it led far out into the deep water. He resolved to watch the path, hoping to have a longer look at the stranger.

For several days he watched, but saw nothing unusual. At last, one evening, just at twilight, he saw, swimming slowly up the pathway, its nose barely showing above water, a brown animal. Hardly daring to move, for fear of frightening it, he stole forward to get a good, long look. Nearer and nearer swam the animal to the water cottage, till, diving through the doorway, it disappeared.

This, then, was the owner, the builder of the queer little mud house, with its roof of rushes and its cellar full of water. So it was not the ducks, the mice, the turtles nor the frogs that built the house, but the big, brown muskrat.

As the boy went home he said to himself :

"I am glad I watched and waited till I found out what it was. It pays to keep one's eyes open."

JENNIE'S HAPPY YEAR.

"I remember," said the doctor's wife, "the day that Jennie Marshall first came to school. There were but ten of us, and we were like other girls. Our fathers paid our way through school, and we thought we never could endure it when it leaked out that Mrs. Vance was going to take a charity scholar, a poor clergyman's orphan to prepare for teaching."

"Betty Kenneth declared she would never see her ; she 'would pass her as though she were the blank wall,' which we thought a fine revenge on the girl for being poor. We all resolved to do the same."

"But when the day came, Mrs. Vance led in a thin little cripple, with an appealing face and hump upon her back."

"This is Jennie Marshall," she said. There was a moment's pause, and then Betty marched straight up and kissed her, and we all followed her. Mrs. Vance looked surprised and pleased, but she soon led the new scholar out, and then we stared at each other.

"I can't make war on cripples," said the roughest girl in the class.

"Betty's face was red, and she spoke vehemently. 'I know what we will do ! She thinks of her deformity all of the time ; I see it in her face. We must make her forget it. Do you hear, girls ? It is a little thing for us to do—make her forget it !'

"If a teacher told us to do this, we should probably have disobeyed her ; but Betty was the wildest among us. We were ready to follow her."

"We all went to work. We took Jennie into all our clubs ; we told her all our secrets. Not a word or a look ever touched on her deformity, or hinted that there was any difference between us."

"If she had been a whining, priggish girl, our good intentions might have been thrown away ; but she was an affectionate little soul, ready to laugh at all our jokes. I fancy she was little used to jokes or fun. People had kept that terrible hump in her mind always, as though that was to be the chief thing in life for her."

"She was not clever at her books, but Betty found out that she could embroider exquisitely. Then we asked Mrs. Vance to offer a prize for needlework with the others, and Jennie, of course, took it."

"She had a voice fine and tender as a lark's, and Betty always contrived that people who could understand it should hear her sing. I have seen old men come to her with their eyes wet with tears, and thank her for her songs. Even when we had tableaux, we contrived that Jennie's lovely, sad face should be seen among the others."

"What was the end of it ? O, it was not like a story or a play, with some great blessing coming in at the close. It was a severe winter, and several of the girls had heavy colds, two of them pneumonia. Jennie was one. She was not strong enough to fight against it. She was the only one who died."

"Yes, her poor little story came to a sudden end. We all saw her on that last day. Betty even whispered to her a great secret. 'You can tell the other girls when you are well,' she said, nodding."

"Jennie laughed ; but she looked at each of us as we kissed her in a queer, steady way."

"I never was so happy in my life, girls," she whispered, 'as here with you. Never. I wish I could stay—'

"That was all ; but when we looked at her dead face the next day, there was a quiet smile on it."

"Betty's little effort had made the last year of the tired child's life peaceful and bright, and I thought that she surely had carried some of its happiness up with her to the home where her deformity could not follow her."

WE WILL NOT.

It takes character to say "No." I have a friend who says the first thing she would teach a boy, if she had one, would be to say "No."

The three Hebrew children said : "We will not serve thy gods ;" and there they rested. They had nothing to do with the results. If the king threw them into the fiery furnace that was his business ; and it was God's business to look after the fire when they were thrown into it. They simply said and acted "No ; we will not." dare to say, "No !"

We are too apt to think what the result will be if we say "No." All we have to do is to decide what is right, and stand by it ; and if we do not do this we are not worthy to be called by His name.

MARY.

Her father lived in Bleecker Street. That was all that the bevy of bright girls at the church sociable knew about her. They didn't know her name or her father's business, but they knew that she came to the Sunday school and to the evening meetings, and that she lived in Bleecker Street. Of course they "didn't know what to say to her," and so they didn't say anything to her, not even "good afternoon."

She was plainly, but neatly attired ; her face had a sweet, long suffering expression on it, and if the sunshine of prosperity had been within and around her, she might have been beautiful. She sat quietly in one corner, looking on, and evidently enjoying all she saw.

Her face lighted up as a middle-aged lady entered the church parlours and approached her. "I'm so glad you came, Mary," said the lady ; "it will do you good to get away from the sick room a little while." Then Mary was introduced to a girl of her own age, who wore one of those little Maltese crosses, *In His Name*, and for the brief further time she stayed was companioned and happy.

Mary's father had seen better days, but sickness and adversity had overtaken him, and he had drifted into a tenement house in Bleecker Street, where this church visitor had found his family. The mother was an invalid, and Mary was her nurse and the stay of the household. She had been gathered by the visitor into the Sabbath school, and encouraged to attend the evening meetings and come to the church socials.

What did she think about as she sat there, looking on before her friend came? Did she wonder if the gay girls who glanced at her, and "passed by on the other side," were in their hearts followers of the meek and lowly Jesus? Did Paul's exhortation, "Be courteous," come to her mind? Did she hear the Saviour saying to those on the left hand, "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in?" Probably none of these things occurred to her ; but they did occur to a young man who noted her patient face, her modest air, and who had many a time wondered at the neglect shown to this gentle and sweet girl, simply because she lived in Bleecker Street.

"Man's inhumanity to man" has often been the subject of eloquent discourse. May not something be said of woman's inhumanity to woman?

FINISH IT.

When Samuel F. B. Morse, afterwards famous as the inventor of the electric telegraph, was a young painter studying in London, he made a drawing from a small cast of the Farnese Hercules, intending to offer it to Benjamin West as an example of his work.

Being anxious for the favourable opinion of his master, he spent a fortnight upon the drawing, and thought he had made it perfect.

When Mr. West saw the drawing he examined it critically, commended it in this and that particular, then handed it back, saying, "Very well, sir, very well. Go on and finish it."

"But it is finished," said the young artist.

"O, no !" said Mr. West, "look here, and here and here." And he put his fingers upon various unfinished places.

Mr. Morse saw the defects now that they were pointed out to him, and he devoted another week to remedying them. Then he carried the drawing again to the master. Mr. West was evidently much pleased, and lavished praises upon the work ; but at the end he handed it back, and said as before : "Very well, indeed, sir. Go on and finish it."

"Is it not finished?" asked Mr. Morse, by this time all but discouraged.

"Not yet ; you have not marked that muscle, nor the articulations of the finger joints."

The student once more took the drawing home, and spent several days in retouching it. He would have it done this time.

But the critic was not yet satisfied. The work was good, "very good indeed, remarkably clever," but it needed to be "finished."

"I cannot finish it," said Mr. Morse, in despair.

"Well," answered Mr. West, "I have tried you long enough. You have learned more by this drawing than you would have accomplished in double the time by a dozen half-finished drawings."

BE HONOURABLE.

Boys and young men sometimes start into life with the idea that one's success depends on sharpness and chicanery. They imagine if a man is able to "get the best of a bargain," no matter by what deceit and meanness he carries his point, his prosperity is assured. This is a great mistake. Enduring prosperity cannot be founded on cunning and dishonesty. The tricky and deceitful man is sure to fall a victim, sooner or later, to the influences which are forever working against him. The future of that young man is safe who eschews every shape of double dealing, and lays the foundation of his career in the enduring principles of everlasting truth.

GOOD WORDS FOR BOYS.

An English writer says : "A gentleman must be polite, gentle, truthful and honest. And if a boy wishes to become a gentleman, and will rule his life by those four words, he will succeed. But he will find when he begins to try, that those four words, simple as they are, have deep meanings, and it may not be always easy for him to put them into daily practice."

These words are good for girls, too, if they want to become real ladies and not mere shams.