

Our Young Folks.

FOR YOU.

I have some good advice for you,
My merry little man,
'Tis this: where'er your lot is cast
Oh, do the best you can!
And find the good in everything,
No matter what or where;
And don't be always looking for
The hardest things to bear.

Oh, do not stand with idle hands,
And wait for something grand,
While precious moments slip away
Like grains of shining sand!
But do the duty nearest you,
And do it faithfully,
For stepping stones to greater things
These little deeds shall be.

In this big world of ours, my boy,
There's work for all to do,
Just measure by the golden rule
That which is set for you;
And try it with the square of truth,
And with the line of right.
In every act and thought of yours,
Oh, keep your honour bright!

A DREADED TASK.

A task never grows smaller or lighter by sitting down and lamenting that it must be done, and there is an old maxim that teaches us that a thing "once begun is half done."

A farmer friend of mine has a boy of fourteen years, named Billy, who is like a good many other boys of my acquaintance. His heart is heavy, and a cloud immediately overspreads his face when he is asked to make himself useful.

"Billy," said Mr. H. one day when I was out at his farm, "why don't you go to work on that little patch of potatoes?"

"Awe," whined Billy, "there's so many of taters I'll never get them hoed."

"You won't if you don't begin soon."

"I hate to begin."

"How are you ever going to do the work if you don't begin?"

"Well, I'll begin pretty soon."

His father walked away, and I heard Billy exclaim in a tone that indicated great mental distress: "Plague on them old taters! It makes me sick to think of them!"

"Why do you think about them, then?" I said laughingly.

"I've got to," he replied dolefully, with a sorrowful shake of the head. "I've been thinking about them ever since I got up this morning."

"How long, now, Billy, will it really take you to hoe them?"

"Well, at least an hour."

"And you have been distressed about it ever since you got up?"

"Well, I hate to hoe taters."

"And you've been up a little more than five hours?"

"Well, I I—," Bill began to grin, took up his hoe, and said, "I never thought of that!"

And the potatoes were hoed in just forty minutes.

He doubles a task who dreads it.

NOT THE TOOL BUT THE WORKMAN.

We all know the story of Paganini, the great violinist, who in his early days, before his name was known, stepped out before an audience to make one of his first ventures after fame. Before beginning, as he was handling his instrument rather awkwardly, he snapped a string, and a moment after another. Sympathising with the nervousness of the untried aspirant for their favour, the people waited quietly, when, drawing his bow again, a quick, jangling sound showed a third string broken. And so it went on until there was but one left, the rustle in the house, meantime, of mingled pity and ridicule growing louder and louder. Then, at last, suddenly straightening himself up, the youthful genius swept his bow across the maimed violin, drawing forth such exquisite melody that every murmur sank instantly into silence, while his hearers listened entranced.

Into your hands and mine, dear young people, God has put an instrument with which he invites us to join in the chorus of praise which is ascending to him from all quarters of the globe. We very often grumble that it is not larger and finer, not of this make or that, not a cornet instead of a harp; we declare that it is useless to attempt to bring music from anything so clumsy or so insignificant. Let us in future remember Paganini—remember that it is not the instrument, but the player who has most to do with the performance. Perhaps you are ready to say, "Paganini! How many Paganinis are there?" And I answer, "In God's great orchestra just as many as have the will to be." You, whoever you are—and it may be that you are not very gifted and are beset with many difficulties and commonplaces and discouragements—still, you may, under the teaching of the wonderful Master send forth such strains of harmony day by day that the angels will praise God at the sound, and poor sinners travelling the downward road to death will stop to listen to it.

But, then, the other half of my sermon is to warn you against Paganini's example. Do not, I beg you, as he, confident in his genius, is suspected of having done, break off any

of your strings wilfully. You need them all; you cannot afford to do without one jot of the beauty and compass of your instrument. If Paganini could discourse such sweet music on one string, what could he not have done on his full number? The boy who is in hot pursuit of a "good time" when he ought to be at his books, the girl who stuffs her mind with vanities, the man, woman, or child who wraps in a napkin and buries away any talent or smallest fraction of a talent, is marring that part of the symphony which the great Director has given him in charge.

WHO CAN BEST BE SPARED.

Young men, the first question your employers ask themselves when it is thought necessary to economize in the matter of salaries is, "Who can best be spared?" It is the barnacles, the shirks, the makeshifts, somebody's good-for-nothing. Young men, please remember that these are not the ones who are called for when responsible positions are to be filled. Would you like to gauge your own future for a position of prominence? Would you like to know the probabilities of your getting such a position? Enquire within! What are you doing to make yourself valuable in the position you now occupy? If you are doing with your might what your hands find to do, the chances are ten to one that you soon become so valuable in that position that you cannot be spared from it, and then, singular to relate, will be the very time when you are sought out for promotion for a better place.

A BOY'S ENEMY.

Once upon a time—to tell when and where would be a breach of confidence—a bright-eyed, well fed, well-housed boy told me that he "believed it was easier for a fellow to really amount to something if he had a rather tough time of it, than for us fellows who have everything so outrageously easy right straight along." My boy is not the first one who has found Ease and Soft-living hard giants to fight; very sleepy, slow giants they are, but hard fellows to kill. Yet, does it require very much more grit and grace to fight them than to fight unthrift, ignorance and hideous unromantic poverty?

WHAT SMOKING DOES FOR BOYS.

A medical man, struck with the large number of boys under fifteen years of age whom he observed smoking, was led to enquire into the effect the habit had upon the general health. He took for his purpose thirty-eight aged from nine to fifteen, and carefully examined them. In twenty-seven he discovered injurious traces of the habit. In twenty-two there were various disorders of the circulation and digestion, palpitation of the heart and more or less taste for strong drink. In twelve there were frequent bleedings of the nose, ten had disturbed sleep and twelve had slight ulceration of the mucous membrane of the mouth, which disappeared on ceasing the use of tobacco for some days. The doctor treated them all for weakness, but with little effect until the smoking was discontinued, when health and strength were restored.

HOLD FAST, BOYS.

Hold on to your tongue when you are just ready to swear, lie, or speak harshly, or use an improper word.

Hold on to your hand when you are about to punch, strike, scratch, steal, or do any improper act.

Hold on to your foot when you are on the point of kicking, running off from study, or pursuing the path of error, shame or crime.

Hold on to your temper when you are angry, excited, or imposed upon, or others are angry with you.

Hold on to your heart when evil associates seek your company, and invite you to join in their mirth, games and revelry.

MIX THEM WITH BRAINS.

It is told of the famous painter, Opie, that when asked what he mixed his colours with, to obtain such beautiful tints, he answered, "With brains, sir."

This is the secret of success in everything, whether it is painting or patching, or piling wood. The boy who mixes his efforts "with brains" when he is weeding the garden, or driving the cows, or going on an errand, or selling goods in a store, will be the efficient boy, the one who is thought of first when people are looking for a "nice, smart boy" to do good work for good pay. And the girl who brings her brains into service when she is minding baby or dusting the room or washing the dishes, will be the one whom mother calls "her comfort," whom little brothers and sisters run to in their troubles, who finds work easier and pleasanter every day.

There is a listless, indifferent way of working which seems sometimes to answer the purpose, just as well, but it never does the worker any good. It would seem a foolish thing, would it not, when one has work to do, so to do it as to fail to get any benefit from it one's self? The dishes may be washed without breakage, or the weeds all pulled out of the garden, but if there has been no thought given to the work, the worker is none the better for it, though the employer or the parent may be. Boys and girls, what you want to do for yourselves is to make character. You want to build up right the real boy or girl who lives in your body, at least as fast as the body itself is built up. And the way to develop character is to put brains into your work, to give yourself heartily to the duty at hand, whether it is work or play. Are not those the best playfellows who put brains into their play?

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

Aug. 4, 1890.
L. 10.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Luke 15: 11-32.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. Luke xv. 18.

INTRODUCTION.

The parable of the prodigal son was spoken to the same audience that listened to the two that precede it. This parable is one of simple and touching beauty and pathos and has called forth the admiration of every age since first it was uttered. It has higher and better claims to our reverence and regard. It is much more than a beautiful picture skillfully drawn, of an incident that moves the human heart. It unfolds the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and conveys to mind and heart a knowledge of God's saving truth. No wonder that the parable of the Prodigal Son has such a charm. It reveals the heart of the Infinite Father.

I. The Wanderer.—The members of the family mentioned in the parable that stand out prominently are the father and the sons. The elder son was the heir to the larger portion of goods that belonged to the father. His personal interest in the home and its belongings was such that he was content to stay. He showed no desire to leave and try his fortune elsewhere. It was otherwise with his younger brother. He was tired of the monotony and regularity of home life. His father's rule was irksome; he wants to go abroad and see the world, to join in its amusements and share in its pleasures. He presents the request to his father that his share of the paternal estate might be given him. With this the father complies. After a brief delay the prodigal having collected the share his father had given him takes his departure. The prodigal leaves home behind him and goes into a far country. Now he thinks he is free from his father's advice and control and he can do as he likes. He falls deeper and deeper into evil ways. The means his father had given him do not last long, because he made a sad misuse of them: he wasted his substance with riotous living. There is no difficulty in finding out who are meant by the several persons of the parable. The Father is God. The elder brother represents the Jewish nation and the younger the Gentiles. The Prodigal Son also represents the career of the sinner and how strikingly he represents the downward course of transgression. At home he had all needful comfort and freedom. His wants were provided for and he had his father's love to watch over him and his wisdom to instruct him. He longed to be his own master, the evil propensities of his nature were gaining ascendancy over him. He went into the far country to be, as he thought, away from God. After the first step his descent was rapid. He rioted in evil and sinful ways. What his father had given him was soon spent. The noble faculties of the soul God-given are enfeebled and wasted by sin and sinful pleasures, opportunities were wasted, and the prodigal is unprepared to meet the future. His course was ever more rapidly downward. All his means for procuring what he considered enjoyment were gone, "he had spent all." Then came a famine "and he began to be in want." By sin the soul is bereft of its support. The world has neither ambitions nor pleasures to satisfy the longings of the hungry soul. How dreary and desolate its condition when first it comes to realize this. For the poor prodigal there is a lower depth of degradation still. He has no friends in the far country to help and comfort him in his distress. He joins a citizen, one who has his home there. This citizen sends him into his fields to feed swine. Those who heard the parable would readily understand how far the prodigal had fallen. No Jew would voluntarily undertake a position so humiliating as to tend animals that the law pronounced unclean. His work was as ill-paid as it was degrading. "He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." The husks here mentioned are the pods of the kharub tree. "He who would not feed on the bread of angels petitions in hunger for husks of swine."

II. The Wanderer's Return.—The lesson now shows in the clearest manner the nature of true repentance. The first step mentioned is that the prodigal "came to himself." Selfishness and sin had overborne his true self. Heart, mind and conscience were awakened; to their voice he listens. He contrasts his present miserable and degraded state with the condition of things at home. His thoughts now turn homeward to his father. The sinner under the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit realizes the awful nature as well as the misery of sin, and resolves to have done with it. The prodigal forms a good resolution. He determines to go back to his father and confess his sin, acknowledge his unworthiness and to ask for the humblest place in the household. So under the power of conviction the awakened soul resolves to leave off wilful sinning and turn to God. Repentance involves the forsaking of sin, deep heart-felt sorrow for having sinned, the acknowledgment of unworthiness, and the desire to be forgiven.

III. The Penitent's Welcome.—The prodigal did not content himself with forming good resolutions, and doing as so many often do, continuing in his evil ways and in his misery. "He arose and went." He left the far country and all its evils behind him. While the poor prodigal foot-sore, travel-stained and in rags is on his way back, his father sees him "when he was yet a great way off, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." All this before the prodigal had uttered a word. How expressive of the boundless mercy and forgiving love of the Heavenly Father! While the sinner is turning to God the divine mercy and compassion go forth to meet him. He is received in the embrace of the divine love, and the kiss of peace and reconciliation is given. As a part of true repentance there must be confession of sin. This a duty which the prodigal, though conscious of his father's forgiveness, cannot omit. He said all he had resolved to say with the exception of "make me as one of thy hired servants." Now that he had been restored to his place in the father's heart and home it was no longer necessary. He was conscious of the higher blessing of sonship, he will not therefore ask for the lower one of servitude. Then the father gives orders for a fitting celebration of the prodigal's return. The filthy rags are to be replaced by the best robe, a ring was to be placed on his hand and shoes on his feet. The spiritual significance of this is understood to be the clothing of the repentant sinner with the robe of Christ's righteousness, the signet-ring the seal of adoption by the Holy Spirit, and the shoes all needed qualification for his henceforth walking in the paths of righteousness in the spirit of new obedience. The joy occasioned by the prodigal's return was to be celebrated by a sumptuous feast. All in the household were to share in the joy. So as in the two previous parables we are taught that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

Those that live in the far country are without Christ, without God and without hope in the world.

Riotous living ever leads to soul hunger, misery and degradation. The way of transgressors is hard.

There is no way out of the far country but by genuine repentance.

The Infinite Father yearns compassionately for the return of His erring children. He is waiting to be gracious.