

BOYS AND GIRLS

Afterwhile.

Afterwhile—and one intends
To be gentler to his friends—
To walk with them in the hush
On still evenings, o'er the plush
Of home-leading fields and stand
Long at parting, hand in hand:
One, in time, will joy to take
New resolves for some one's sake,
And wear then the look that lies
Clear and pure in other eyes—
He will smoothe and reconcile
His own conscience—afterwhile.
—James Whitcomb Riley.

Her Tenth.

Lovice James had just begun to study fractions, and so when the minister spoke often of 'a tenth' in his sermon one Sunday morning, Lovice listened with unusual attention. What he said about a tenth set the little girl to thinking. The next morning she sat in the hammock in the vine-covered corner of the porch, sheltered from the softly-falling rain. She had a book in her lap, but she was thinking, not reading. Lovice was ten years old, and every Monday morning her father gave her ten cents for her week's allowance, to be spent as she pleased. The James children all had been brought up on the plan of having for spending money as many pennies a week as they were years old. As each birthday came round they were very happy over the thought of their 'raise' of one more penny a week.

Lovice's ten cents was usually gone by Saturday afternoon, and Mr. James always gave her a penny for Sunday School; but after what the minister had said about giving at least a tenth of our money to the Lord, she had decided that she ought to take her Sunday School penny out of her ten cents, for that was a tenth. She had made up her mind to keep a nice little record of what she did with her money, so, after thinking it over, she went and brought her little memorandum-book and wrote four headings, each at the top of a new page. The first was 'Sunday School'; the next 'Saved'; then 'Spent foolishly'; and, last of all, 'Spent when you have to spend.' The last heading was so long it took up two whole lines. She didn't know just how older people kept their accounts, so she had to make up a way. That night, just before bedtime, she showed Mr. James her book. 'And, father, I'm going to give a tenth to the Lord,' she added, 'and you will not need to give my Sunday School penny any more.'

'That's right, daughter,' answered her father; but he could not help smiling at the headings in her book.

The next Saturday afternoon Lovice sat once more in the hammock, this time with her account-book in her hand. It did not rain now, but was clear and sunny, and the bright sunshine through the vines made a golden net-work on the floor of the porch. Lovice looked carefully over her record. The pages headed 'Saved' and 'Sunday School' were empty. On the last was written, 'One cent for a sponge and one cent for a soapstone pencil.' Lovice could have bought two slate-pencils for a cent, but they were the scratchy kind, and she liked the soapstone best. The third page troubled her most. 'Two cents for lickerish' and 'One cent for lozingers' six times! All her money was gone, and there wasn't any tenth left! Those lozenges were so tempting in the tiny window of the school store, each rolled in paper of different colors, and each with a different flavor. Lovice liked the sassafras best, all wrapped in pink. Each roll had a little printed slip in it with your fortune on it. Lovice was considered quite a good speller in the schoolroom, but she never had had any such words as 'lozenges' and 'licorice' in her spelling lesson, and she had to spell them as best she could. It was a very sober-faced little girl who asked her father the next morning for a penny for Sunday School, and explained that her pennies were all gone. 'You must lay aside your tenth first, Lovice,' said her father, 'or you never will do it at all.'

On her way to school the next morning, Lovice stopped at the little school-store and

asked for an empty spool-box. At noon when she reached home she wrote on it, 'One Tenth,' put a penny in it, and hid it safely away in the top bureau drawer. All during the week, as one by one she handed the rest of her pennies over the school-store counter to the plump little German woman, she thought of the tenth laid away, and it made her happy. When the next Sunday came, there it was in the spool-box, waiting to be carried to Sunday School. 'I'm glad I put it there first thing, father,' she said. 'It's a much better way.'

When Lovice grew older and had more money, she kept on giving, but she changed the fraction to a ninth, and then an eighth, and kept on giving more and more, for she found it one of the very happiest things in all the world to give her money to the Lord. And she always felt glad that she began when such a little girl to lay aside the tenth first. —'Canadian Churchman.'

The One-stringed Fiddle.

(Thomas K. Beecher, in 'In Time with the Stars.')

'Hello! Here's father's old fiddle, to be sure.'

We were up in the garret. What is a house good for without a garret? What is a garret good for unless it has old things in it? What are old things good for unless you can go and rummage them, and 'O!' and 'Ah!' about them, when it comes a rainy day?

'Well, well, here's the old fiddle. Many's the time you have played "Merrily, O!" and "Hunter's Chorus," and "Pompey Duck-legs." I'd been wondering what had become of you, and here you are. Well, well.'

By this time the fiddle woke up and began to want things.

'"Merrily, O!" Play "Merrily, O!" Play on me! Make me laugh! I want something. I ain't happy.'

'But,' said I, 'you are not ready to be played on. You have but one string, and that is a G string, green and good for nothing. There is no "Merrily, O!" in you, and I can't get it out.'

'Yah!' yelled the fiddle, 'I don't like it. I don't want to be waked up. I want to be happy. Play on me. Make me merry.'

'I tell you I can't play on you. You haven't strings enough. The string you have won't bear tuning.'

'Yah!' said the fiddle, like a cross baby.

So I set the fiddle up on the button of its tailpiece, and put the bridge in place, and the G string, and, as near as I could guess without a tuning-fork, began to strain it up. Throoom, throme, thrum, thrum. And when it made a little noise something like music, I put the fiddle under my chin and took the old bow and sawed away on the G string, playing a slow tune with five notes in it.

The fiddle was pleased, and said, 'Do so some more.'

So I played it again and again, just as you whistle to a baby to amuse it, or tell stories to little boys.

By and by the fiddle snarled out: 'I'm tired of that tune. Play something else.'

'But I can't play much on one string,' I said. 'If you will have two strings, I will play six tunes; but on one string I can't play much.'

'Well, I want six tunes,' said the fiddle.

'Very well, when you have two strings, you can have six tunes; and with three strings sixty, and with four strings six thousand—all the tunes in the world. But you are nothing but a poor, one-stringed fiddle now. I can't do much with you unless you have more strings.'

'Well, I want some more strings,' said the fiddle.

At that I put the fiddle back into the barrel and went down-stairs.

'What was that noise up in the garret?' asked the children.

'O,' said I, 'I was playing on father's old, one-stringed fiddle.'

'Where is it? Bring it down,' they said.

So I told my boy where it was, and let him bring it down. And I heard the fiddle say:

'Now this is something like. I shall see something of life. Now I'll have a good time.'

And as it came into the warm parlor, it made a noise on its one string like the purring of a cat. The fiddle was contented for as much as a minute, and lay on its back on the table, looking round with its four black pegs of eyes on each side of its throat, and really seemed quiet and satisfied.

I talked with the children about the tunes that the old fiddle had played, and as long as I talked about it the fiddle purred. When I played the five-note tune for the children, and they said:

'Is that all?'

Then a young lady sat down at my piano and played a splendid march. And the fiddle stopped purring and tried to twist off behind a pile of books out of sight, and said:

'Play on me. Make noises on me like that.'

'Why, I can't,' said I. 'Just see!'

So I opened the piano and showed the discontented fiddle more than two hundred strings in the piano, and more than eighty hammers to strike these strings. 'You haven't strings enough to sound like the piano. You can't be a piano, if you try.'

'Well, what can I be?'

'Only a fiddle.'

'Am I a fiddle now?'

'Not much! You have but one string, and that the lowest, the G string. You need a D string and an A string and an E string; and when I have time I will get them for you. But nobody can make much out of you as long as you have but one string.'

'Well,' said the fiddle, 'if I can't be a piano, I don't want to be anything.'

And snap went the old rusty, rotten G string, and down fell the bridge, and there lay the fiddle, like a sulky boy that has just thrown his book into the corner, and doesn't want to be a man.

'Well,' said I, 'some of the finest music in the world I have heard from violins. For when a fiddle has grown up, and has four strings and behaves itself, we call it a violin. One string is better than nothing; but if you choose to lie there, I can't do anything for you. Here, my son, take it up to the garret again, and put it in the barrel.'

As they went up the stairs, the sound-post got loose and rattled round in the bowels of the fiddle: 'I don't care! I don't care! I don't care!' And so the fiddle went upstairs and was forgotten.

'Mamma, what shall I do? I don't know what to do.'

'Don't you want something to eat?'

'No, I don't.'

'Well, do you want to play marbles?'

'I can't play marbles.'

'Well, here, take this towel, and learn to sew, and I will give you two cents if you hem the towel.'

'I don't want to sew. I ain't a girl.'

'Well, what do you want to do?'

'I want to do something. What shall I do?'

Then mamma burst out laughing, and said: 'You are nothing but a one-stringed fiddle, and we shall have to put you in the barrel, upstairs in the garret, unless you get more strings to your fiddle. The only things you like to do are to eat and sleep; and when you have eaten yourself full you don't want anything except something more to taste good. Now, you would better get some more strings to your fiddle.'

And the boy opened his big eyes and said: 'Strings to my fiddle? I wished I had 'em.'

'Well,' said mamma, 'reading is one string. When people have learned to read, they can enjoy hours and days and weeks and years, and have gentle music every minute, and be just as happy as the days are long. Work is another string. If you learn to be a carpenter, or a mason, or a machinist, or a cabinet-maker, and learn to do your work well, it will keep you contented as long as you live. Drawing is another string. If you learn to draw well with a pencil or with a pen, you can go through life and see pictures all day and draw them all night. Writing is another string. Sewing is another string, cooking is another, and making garden is another. Every time you learn to do anything, and