

Sunday-School Advocate.

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GILBERT LESLIE'S FRIENDS.

EARLY in the spring, some seven weeks or so after Gilbert's talk with Alice, the boys of the Academy were clustered together at noon on a sunny knoll which was sheltered from the north winds by a group of evergreens. It was near the short spring vacation, and Gilbert was very anxious to be foremost at the examination, especially in Algebra. Hence, while most of the boys were at play around the foot of the knoll he was busy over his slate a few feet above them.

Among Gilbert's classmates was one named Peter Vanbroek, who always appeared very friendly to him, but who really hated him. Peter was sly, was envious of Gilbert, was bent on doing something to bring him into evil repute among the boys. So, seeing him busy over his sums, he took his slate and sat down beside him, saying:

"I believe I must follow your good example, Gil, and work at my sums while the other fellows play."

"Do," replied Gilbert, smiling, "and when examination comes you will get a prize while they will get nothing."

Peter pretended to work a while; but when Gilbert finished his sum he turned to look at it, and, watching his opportunity, dropped his knife into the pocket of Gilbert's coat. The next moment, clapping his hand on his friend's (?) shoulder, he cried, "Well done, Gil!" and jumping up, ran down the knoll and began playing with the other boys. A few moments later Gilbert followed him.

After playing until recess was nearly over, Peter suddenly put his hand into his pocket, and looking very blank and troubled, cried:

"I have lost my knife!"

"Where?" "When did you have it last?" "How came you to do that?" "What a pity!" "What, that splendid new knife!" with other similar questions and remarks were uttered freely by the boys.

"I had my knife in my pocket when I came out of school," said Peter, "and it must be here somewhere."

"Let us all hunt for Peter's knife," cried Gilbert, as he began to look around the foot of the knoll.

The boys joined him in the search, which was, of course, a vain one. After a few minutes Peter put on a very injured look and said:

"I'll bet that I dropped it and somebody has picked it up."

"Don't you say that again!" cried Tom Collins, somewhat angrily. "Do you think we are thieves?"

"Thieves or not, I'm sure I dropped my knife here, and since we can't find it, somebody must have picked it up," retorted Peter.

"I'm sure I haven't for one. See here!" said Gilbert, turning the pockets of his trousers inside out.

Most of the other boys said and did the same. But Peter, turning to Gilbert, said, "You haven't turned out your coat-pocket, Mr. Gil. Let us see if my knife isn't there."

Gilbert felt a little angry, but putting the reins on his temper, he pulled out his coat-pocket, when, to his great surprise, Peter's knife dropped out. Gilbert looked very blank, so did the boys generally. Peter pretended to be very angry, and said:

"I always thought you would steal if you had a chance, Gil Leslie."

"Gil Leslie is a thief!" cried half a dozen boys. "Let's cut him!"

"I did not steal that knife," said Gilbert; "I don't know how it got into my pocket."

"I believe you, Gilbert," said Eddie Stout, placing himself beside Gilbert with the spirit and manner of a champion.

"Thank you for that word, Eddie," said Gilbert. "You are a true friend. Have I no other friend among you all?" and he thought of Alice and her fable.

"We won't be friends with a thief," said Tom Collins, and the other boys ranged themselves by his side.

Just at that moment the school-bell rung, and the boys rushed from their play-ground to their studies. Peter, bent on doing Gilbert all the mischief he could, went to the teacher and charged Gilbert with stealing his knife.

The teacher heard him tell his story through. He then turned to the scholars and asked:

"How many of you believe that Gilbert stole Peter's knife?"

Every hand was raised except Eddie Stout's!

"Well, Gilbert," said the teacher, looking into the boy's troubled face, "it seems that they are all against you but Eddie and I, for I do not believe you guilty of the crime charged upon you by Peter."

O how gratefully Gilbert looked as he lifted his eyes and gazed upon the teacher. The boys looked at each other. Peter turned pale. Eddie smiled on Gilbert. The teacher after a few moments' silence resumed:

"I do not believe Gilbert is a thief, because as I crossed the play-ground by the path which runs through the clump of evergreens I saw Peter drop his knife into



Gilbert's pocket. Why he has been guilty of so much deceit and lying I cannot imagine, but such a boy is too dangerous to be kept here, and I pronounce him expelled from school. I trust his punishment will lead him to repentance, and that hereafter you, my children, will be careful not to trust too much to appearances. There was much in this case to make Gilbert appear guilty, and yet had you known all the facts you would not have condemned him as you did. Now, boys, to your studies!"

After school the boys gathered round Gilbert with many words of kindly greeting. He received them civilly, but said little. His heart turned toward Eddie Stout, and placing his arm round his waist he walked homeward with him, feeling that among all the boys whom he had thought his friends this one alone had proved himself to be truly such in the hour of trial.

When Alice heard his account of this affair she smiled and said:

"Now, brother, be careful! You have learned that all are not friends who appear friendly, but don't let that make you mistrust every boy you know. While many are false, a few are true as Eddie was. Seek to find out the true ones and be true to them. Be kind to all, but count those your friends only whom you find after trial to be noble and good."

This was good advice, and I commend it to all my young readers, who will find out by and by that true friendship is not quite as common as blackberries, and yet there is enough of it to make life pleasant.

MY LETTER BUDGET.

"WELL, Mr. Editor, you look tired to-day," says the Corporal, as I sit down upon my tripod in my editorial den.

Yes, I reply, I am a little weary, Corporal. I have just returned from Pittsburgh—smoky but good-hearted Pittsburgh—where the anniversary of the S. S. Union of the M. E. Church (U. S.) was held. We had a fine time, Corporal. Bishop Simpson, Dr. Reid, Dr. Wiley, Dr. Baird, and other fine men were there to speak and preach. The people turned out grandly, the children came in crowds, and for two days we had a grand time about Sunday-schools. Pittsburghers love the Sunday-school, I'm sure, and I hope the anniversary did them good. I think it did.

My own part was to preach in the morning at Christ Church, to speak to a crowd of boys and girls in Smithfield Church in the afternoon, and in South Common Church, Alleghany City, in the evening. On Monday I tried to give a report at the anniversary, but my voice broke down, and I had to whisper hoarsely what I had to say—but, Corporal, open your letter-bag.

"I obey, Mr. Editor, without a word. L. R. says:

"My little brother is the sweetest little babe you ever saw. O, Mr. Editor, I wish you could see him. He just commences to talk. I have a little brother in heaven too. My pa is away from here and has been sick in a hospital for six months. Ma got a letter from his nurse about a month ago that said my pa could not live. O how my ma did cry! She got sick, and we had to have the doctor to her. We thought she could not live. I prayed for her a great deal, and ma prayed for pa too. The nurse said that my pa told him to tell ma that he was resigned to the will of God. He said, 'Come life or death, I fear not to die if it is God's will to call me from this world of affliction.' I pray night and morning, and whenever I do wrong mother takes me into her room and prays for me, and I pray for myself too. Now, Mr. Editor, we want to join your Try Company, will you take us? Our names are Libbie, Ellie, and Frankie, and do take my aunt too. I know you would if you knew what a good girl she is. She prays night and morning, and she says she loves the Saviour, and I know she does, for she is so good. Her name is Phebe Ann.

"P. S.—My pa is better now. We will adopt your resolution never to play a practical joke on any one. I read my paper and then send it to pa."

Libbie has a kind heart I know. She has a wise mother, and I hope Libbie won't make those visits to her room necessary very often. Better be good without them. I am glad her pa is better. May he live to return with his brethren in arms! That aunt shall be enlisted on Libbie's recommendation. I give Libbie an editor's blessing.

"D. B. II., of —, writes:

"I thought I would try my hand at recruiting, so yesterday in our Sunday-school I called for volunteers to join the Try Company. There were fifty-four volunteered, and two of my children were detained from going to Sunday-school by sickness, and when I came home last night they volunteered. What says the Corporal to that? Will he muster us in? He may think we are a queer-looking company. The superintendent, teachers, and scholars all wish to be mustered in together. Our ages are from fifty-six to six years. I think if he could see us on dress-parade of a Sabbath-morn he would take us. We do not know how good soldiers we shall make, but we are bound to try and do our best. We want the Corporal to let us know whether he will take us or not. If he don't take us we shall form a regiment of our own, but we shall call it 'Try,' for we are bound to try and be good here, and we hope to meet the great Try Army in heaven. Pray for us that we may not try in vain. Farewell."

A pretty good haul that, my Corporal. If you get recruits at that rate, I think old "I Can't" might as well give up, for your army will soon be big enough to surround him and capture him, arms, ammunition, bag, and baggage.

"That's just what I want, Mr. Editor. Flank movements are good enough when you can't do better, but I believe in an all-round movement that captures the old enemy."

You are a wise commander, my Corporal! Read on!

"MARIA L. B., of —, says:

"I am ten years old this very day. I go to Sabbath-school. I think we have a very kind superintendent, and you will think it no wonder when I tell you he is my father. I am going to send fifteen cents in this letter for your photograph, which I hope you will send me. I think you must be a very good man or you could not make such a good paper for us. I also wish to join your Try Company. I hope you will let me. I will try to be good and love the Lord, so if you please write down my name."

Ah, ah! no wonder Maria likes her superintendent. I wonder if he is ever a little blind when Maria is putting her lips to her neighbor's ears telling that wonderful secret. The corporal says it is his opinion that Maria never whispers in school, and he will enlist her. All right.

"S. B. E., of —, says:

"Will you admit me with the boys? I am only forty-eight years old. I see you admit some older than I am. I have been a member of the Sunday-school about forty years, and over thirty years a member of the Church. I am trying to follow Captain Jesus. Will the Corporal let me march along with the boys to the heavenly land? I have studied tactics a little. I will try to help along all I can and be a good soldier."

S. B. E. must go into my brigade of veterans, where the "boys that are boys" can look at him as an example that it is possible to keep trying and doing all through life. Three cheers for this "old boy!"