



The Family Circle.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

This man, whose homely face you look upon,
Was one of nature's masterful, great men;
Born with strong arms that unfought battles
won;
Direct of speech and cunning with the
pen.

Chosen for large designs, he had the art
Of winning with his humor and he went
Straight to his mark, which was the human
heart;
Wise, too, for what he could not break, he
bent.

Upon his back, a more than Atlas-load,
The burden of the Commonwealth was
laid;
He stooped, and rose up to it, though the
road
Shot suddenly downward, not a whit dis-
mayed.

Hold, warriors, councillors, kings!—all now
give place
To this dear benefactor of the race.
—R. H. Stoddard, in *Scribner's Monthly*.

THAT LIBRARY IN THE HOLLOW OAK.

BY MRS. ANNIE A. PRESTON.

"There comes Honest Sam! Honest Sam is coming," shouted the children in front of the Toplift district schoolhouse one dewy June morning, as an old, humped-back man, with a coarse, repulsive face and a patch over one eye, came slowly limping along up the Daleville road, bending under the burden of two large tin trunks which were fastened to a strap that crossed his protruding shoulders.

The children threw down their bats and balls and ran to meet him, all but a half-dozen or more of the older boys, who gathered quickly in a knot at the corner of the schoolhouse, and as the old peddler passed made rapid signs with their fingers at him. He in turn nodded back at the boys, but kept plodding on in his moderate gait.

The boys thus indicated all giggled at that and exchanged significant glances and poked each other's ribs as the bell rang, and they all rushed helter-skelter for the schoolroom-door.

It took but a minute or two for the twenty-five scholars to settle down quietly in their seats with folded arms, while the pretty little rosy-cheeked teacher, Miss Littlefield, drew from her desk her red morocco-covered Bible and made ready to read from it. As she was turning the leaves slowly, thinking she would select a chapter wherein might be contained some passage appropriate for the basis of a little homily of her own that she proposed to add for the benefit of the boys' whose disrespectful demeanor towards the lame old peddler had attracted her notice, little Maggie Russell raised her hand and, as the teacher nodded pleasantly, said,

"Please Miss Littlefield, Katie Dixon is a crying."

"What is it, Katie?" asked the teacher.

"Come here and tell me what troubles you!" So, with one arm up over her eyes, Katie felt her way with the other along the aisle to the teacher's desk.

"I've lost my pretty, new, slim little red pencil, I have," sobbed Katie.

Miss Littlefield's face flushed a trifle and she cast a sharp, quick look over the schoolroom. The scholars were, all in order except Jasper Marshall, who at that moment dertly passed his right hand down along his left coat-sleeve and immediately folded his arms again.

"Sit down here by me and be quiet now, Katie," said the teacher, "and after the morning exercises are over your pencil shall be found."

Jasper Marshall and Thomas Dale exchanged quick glances, and Walter Freeman hitched a little on his seat.

"They can't all have the pencil," thought the little teacher, "but these boys seem to be very uneasy from some cause."

She dismissed the annoying subject from her mind now, and for the morning Bible lesson read about the rich man and Lazarus. The scholars then recited the twenty-third Psalm in concert, and teacher and pupils joined in the Lord's Prayer. Then followed the brief talk about the respectful and considerate treatment the poor, the old, and the crippled should always receive. A hymn was then sung, after which the roll was called.

Now, instead of the usual order, "Attend to lessons," Miss Littlefield said, pleasantly but firmly,

"Before we proceed further this morning, Katie's pencil must be found. Where did you lose it, Katie?"

"I laid it on my desk when I went back to the anteroom to get my eraser out of my dinner-basket," and Katie began to cry again.

"I am sure no one has left the room since," said the teacher, "and as the pencil hasn't wings and could not leave the desk without hands, it must be somewhere in the room. Every day this term, so far, there have been missing pencils, pens, erasers, pen-holders, and paper. This business must be stopped here and now. Each scholar will now hold up the pencil or pencils in his or her possession, and we will see whether Katie can identify her property."

The pencil was not shown. "I will give the one who has Katie's pencil three minutes' time to return it," said Miss Littlefield with kindling eyes. "If it is not produced before that time expires each scholar will be searched." And she drew out her watch.

How awful were those minutes as they ticked away in the now utter silence of that small schoolroom, the resolute little teacher meanwhile standing in front of the scholars holding up her watch.

"Jasper Marshall, you may come forward first, if you please. Katie, you may go and look carefully in his desk and see if your pencil is there, and so in the other desks as the scholars shall come forward."

This was an unexpected summons to Jasper. He was the oldest boy in the school, a good and generally dutiful scholar, and from a leading family in the village. He obeyed the order with a little reluctance at first, however, saying respectfully, but with an assumption of dignity, as he approached the teacher, "I hope you do not take me for a thief, Miss Littlefield."

"I take none of my scholars for anything but honest boys and girls," she replied; "but if there should be a thief among us we ought, for our own protection, to know it."

"Certainly," said Jasper, politely, proceeding to turn his pockets inside out, three outside and one inside coat-pockets, two vest-pockets, and two pants-pockets.

"Perhaps you would like to have me take off my boots and stockings," said Jasper a little ironically now.

"Yes, if you please," replied Miss Littlefield calmly. "We will make sure work as we go on."

This looked so much like business that the scholars began to be frightened. But the pencil was not there.

"Only a moment more, Jasper. I think there is a hip-pocket in your pants, which you boys are fond of calling a 'pistol-pocket.' I called on your mother when she was making and inserting one for you. She told me you wanted it to carry your Fourth of July crackers and torpedoes in."

Jasper turned pale, and the big boys all fidgeted in their seats as Miss Littlefield proceeded to extract from the pocket indicated, not the missing pencil, but a small, compact, square volume with highly illuminated covers, its title shining out in white from a scarlet ground, *The Thieves' Own Book*.

Miss Littlefield caught her breath, but she put the book into her desk. Then returning to Jasper she quickly passed her small white hand along down the right sleeve of Jasper's coat.

"What is this?" she asked. "I think I understand now, Jasper, the secret of this little rent in your sleeve. I have often wondered why you, so neat and particular a boy as you are in most respects, did not have it mended."

It did not require much skill for the teacher to push the slender, six-sided pencil, which had been concealed between the lining and the outer fabric of the sleeve, out through the little aperture where the whole school could see it. A little buzz of commotion went round the room.

"O teacher, that's my pencil," cried Katie.

"Don't it say 'Dixon' on the end?"

"Yes," Miss Littlefield replies. "This is without doubt your missing pencil. Now you, John, and Thomas, and Henry, and William, and George, and Richard, may all come forward. Your anxious faces and knowing glances while Jasper was being searched have not been lost upon me. Have you been surreptitiously bringing bad books into school?"

The six boys were fairly awed by the blazing eyes of their teacher into emptying the contents of their "hip" pockets upon the platform. They each had one or more objectionable story books, or copies of what purported to be periodicals for young people, with their coarse and flaming pictures and sensational titles.

"Are there any more of my scholars who have of read these books and papers?"

"No, mum," came from all parts of the room.

Very well, the school with the exception of these seven boys, may now take a general recess."

The scholars popped out with white scared faces, and the door was shut.

"Now, boys, tell me all about it," said Miss Littlefield kindly; "it is the best thing you can do. You are standing on dangerous ground. You are so young! And yet you are past the time when scolding or furling will benefit you. The reform-schools, the school-ships, and even the jails and state prisons, are staring you in the face. You must make a clean breast of the whole matter to me, your teacher and friend, and I will help you to begin all over again."

The boys were all crying before she had ceased speaking. Only Jasper found voice to say:

"You see, Miss Littlefield, it has all come about through Honest Sam, whom you and everybody pity so much and are so deceived about. He most always stays over night at Mr. Johnson's. Aleck Jones works there, and he got us into it by asking us boys up there to hear Sam tell stories. Everybody thinks that he's such a good old man that our folks never object to our going. He told us things to make us laugh at first, and then he began to tell us about boys running away and making lots of money, and about thieves, and robbers, and pirates, and highwaymen. After we got real interested he said he knew ever so many such boys and men that most folks supposed were honest people."

"He said we boys could organize into a band of 'money-makers,' and he would peddle for us the things we got. He told us he would after a while sell us some counterfeit money, and being away up here in the country so, no one would ever find us out, and we would all get rich and never be obliged to do a chore of work in our lives. Pretty soon he began to bring us these books and papers. We keep them in a box in that old hollow oak out there in the pasture. But to-day we had some of them with us, for we wanted to exchange them when he came along for others. There is a heap of brush at the foot of the tree and no one but us boys would think of creeping in behind it to get at the cubby-hole near the roots of the old tree."

"We pick up all the little things we can, and Honest Sam pays us for them in his books and papers. These story-papers for boys tell us all about the big cities and the Western country, about boys running away, and how real smart the thieves and robbers and highwaymen are, and how brave they are in helping out of danger the women and girls they know. The books are like the papers a good deal, only the stories are longer and make us real interested. That book you took away from me we haven't had a great while, but that tells us how to get things in stores, and how to hide things in our clothes. It tells about tools to pick locks with, and trunks and drawers—files and things. This morning he made signs to us that he had some with him, and when you thought we were making fun of him we were making signs too that we wanted some more papers."

"We don't have anything to read," whimpered Thomas, "and his papers are better than nothing."

"We will see about that," said the teacher, with a half-pleased, half-determined look taking the place of the sadness that had covered her face; "take your seats now."

She rang the bell, and the children came very quietly in, wondering what their teacher had done to make those boys cry so.

Nothing more was said about the affair at that time, and soon the school was busy over lessons, and everything went on just as usual.

At noon, Miss Littlefield ran up to Mr. Marshall's, and that evening committee, parents, and teacher, met in the schoolroom. The latter briefly and tersely related the events of the morning, and then took the books and papers that had been taken from the boys' pockets from her desk. As she did so, Mrs. Marshall, Jasper's mother, came forward with several volumes and a large bundle of the same kind of "literature" in her white cambric apron.

"Here they are every one of them," said she, "Honest Sam left most of them in that tree this morning. Let's make a fire here in the stove and burn them up; t'will be some satisfaction."

"And I wish, my soul, Honest Sam could have just a feel of the fire along with them," said Mrs. Dale, as her husband handing her a match, she set fire to the bath of vile publications.

"Let us blame ourselves that we were so heedless about our boys' associates," said Mr. Loomis, the committee; "although as far as the old pedler is concerned we have it to say that we all thought him to be a harmless though unfortunate fellow-creature."

As the indignant, grieved, and astonished parents gathered about the brave little teacher, thanking her for the tact and firmness she had shown in her dealing with the misguided lads, she took occasion, in her own gentle and sweet way, to say that she had been surprised at the scarcity of good reading-matter in the district. "I have seen," she continued "several trashy, sensational periodicals, besides your little local paper, in some of the fami-

lies; but if there is a high toned youth's publication or a single religious newspaper in the district I have yet to know it."

"There is not one," said Mrs. Dale, promptly, "and I, for one, am ashamed of it." "I move," said Mrs. Marshall, "that each of us, on the spot, subscribe for some decent paper or magazine, for ourselves and our children. Miss Littlefield here knows what we want, and will recommend the right ones."

She mentioned various religious papers and juvenile publications, and soon the goodly list of subscriptions was made out.

They were sent on, and the following week the periodicals came to hand. These seven boys were looked after pretty sharply for a time by their parents, and after a year of Miss Littlefield's noble ministry in the district as teacher, counsellor, and friend, the scars from this pestilence which walketh at noonday, that had fastened its deadly fangs upon their tender, vulnerable minds, had become somewhat effaced.

Honest Sam suddenly disappeared from the village, and both he and that noxious Hollow-oak Library are only called to mind with merited loathing.—*Illustrated Christian Weekly*.

ALMOST TOO LATE.

Lord Harford had some good ideas. When he improved his estate he did not think only of his own comforts, but had all sorts of comfortable little houses built for the people in his employment. The accommodation over the stables was somewhat limited, so when Robert Sexton and his wife came to Woodlands, they had a comfortable little house given to them in a somewhat retired part of the park, not much more than three minutes' walk from the stables; for Robert, though quite a young man, was Lord Harford's coachman.

Mrs. Sexton, Robert's young wife, was greatly pleased with her little house, built in imitation of a Swiss cottage, though it had only four rooms. Many a workman and his wife in our large towns have to commence their married life in but one room.

The children came—two darlings: and God who gave them took them soon away again. Polly died in infancy; and there was something very sad about little Bobby's death. When six years old he was taken suddenly ill, and in the evening his father, who had to fetch his master from a distance in the night, told his wife to fetch a doctor. Mrs. Sexton was a dreadful woman for putting things off. She thought little Bobby looked better; she did not think it was a case for alarm; and as it was a wet night, if a doctor must be had it would be time enough to get one in the morning.

The coachman returned at six in the morning and found little Bobby much worse. Tired as he was, Mr. Sexton at once went for the doctor, who, when he saw the little fellow said,

"Why was I not sent for before?"

It was too late, and little Bobby died. Mr. Sexton never reproached his wife for this; but her conscience did. She knew her great fault, and of course she could not help feeling at times that her child might have lived, had she procured advice sooner.

The years went on. Polly and little Bobby became but memories, and the Sextons were no longer a young couple. Robert had good wages, and his wife had not too much to do to keep in order her four rooms, prepare the meals, and attend to her husband's comforts. But her habit of procrastination was a constant source of trouble and inconvenience.

"I'm not fond of finding fault," said Lord Harford, one day; "but why don't you get your gloves mended, Robert? It is not pleasant to see a coachman driving with his fingers through his gloves."

Robert was silent; he could not very well say—"I gave them to my wife to mend; but when I was ready to start I found the gloves had not been touched, and there was no time to wait."

One cold March morning Lord Harford died. His nephew and heir was travelling to India, and it was uncertain when he would return. So Woodlands was shut up, and most of the servants were discharged. The horses and carriages were sold; and the lawyer said to Robert Sexton,

"If you like to occupy this house for a time you may. It's as well to have a few people living upon the estate."

Robert had thus a house to live in for a time; and, as he had saved a little money he could afford to wait the arrival of the new Lord Harford.

The summer came and went, so did the winter, but still Lord Harford did not return. Then Robert had a long illness, and was quite unfit for work. When he was better he did what odd jobs he could, assisting flymasters at busy times. But his savings had all vanished; and for the first time since their marriage the Sextons had to think twice before they spent a penny.

When the carrier broke his leg, Robert Sexton took his place for a time. It was then