

"Of Such is the Kingdom."

BY T. COCKBURN.

The winter's wind was whistling, and the snow was drifting by, and the garret windows rattled and creaked so dismally; Tired and worn and weary, watching the long, long day, Plying her needle deftly, a poor widow sat sewing away. Her beautiful face was overshadowed by never-ceasing care, For her little one lay dying—the darling she ill could spare. From her work she seemed to falter, her eyes with tears were dim, With God she held communion, and was praying now to him.

From the little cot beside her came a stifled, mournful sigh; The widowed mother bent and kissed her child so tenderly; And in answer to her query, why his eyes were filled with tears, In accents sweet he answered, "I've been dreaming, mother dear. I dreamt a herald angel came in spotless robes of white, And said, 'Thou hast believed in Jesus, behold him in his might;' And the sky it seemed to open and I saw before me there The King in all his glory and hosts of angels wondrous fair.

"Then rose the song triumphant, filling heaven's glittering hall, 'All hail the power of Jesus' name, the angels prostrate fall.' And oh, the joy that filled my soul when I heard the King exclaim, 'Thou hast loved Jesus, little one, with him thou shalt ever reign.' The throne seemed ablaze with glory, heaven partook of its shining light, And I heard him praise the angels that had fought the noble fight. Then the herald angel beckoned me toward that heavenly land, And, as I awoke, I was praying, mother, we might enter hand in hand."

When night had spent its darkness and gave place to brighter day, All was peace and quiet in the room where the sufferer lay. A neighbour in daily visit—God's ministering angel went, With anxious mien and stealthy step, to the garret of the tenement. There lay the child and mother, clasped in fond embrace, But instead of care and sorrow, joy and peace were on each face. From cold and want and hunger, their souls had taken flight, And with the eventide had passed from darkness into light.

THE WILLING CAPTIVE.

BY MAY EVANS.

It was a sultry summer afternoon, not a leaf was stirring, even the birds seemed to have retired to their nests to take a nap. At last so little Jack and Bessie Warren thought, as they sat on one of the big branches of the old apple-tree. This tree was a favourite haunt of the children's, and many a happy hour was spent there; Bessie with her doll, and Jack with his favourite story-book.

"Yes," Jack had said, "I think they have, for don't big folks take naps in the afternoon, and perhaps birds do the same. They made a pretty picture, those two little children—six-year-old Bessie, with her red dress, white pinafore and big sunbonnet; and Jack, who was nine, with his dark, curly hair and rosy cheeks.

"I think it is nice to think that birdies take naps," said little sister, after a pause, "for they really must get tired flying about and singing all day."

"Yes," agreed Jack. "I think so too." Thus they chatted and played on in the old tree, until the sun began to sink towards the west when Jack exclaimed, "Why, Bessie, it must be past five o'clock; let's hurry home."

"Yes," said Bessie, "or we will be late for supper."

"Let me help you down then," said Jack, who was a perfect little gentleman, jumping down and holding out his hand to Bessie, who took it and dropped lightly to the ground.

"There we are, safe and sound," said Jack, laughing merrily.

"What is that!" exclaimed the little girl in a moment, just as they were preparing for home.

"What?" said Jack. "Why, that sound." "What sound?" persisted her brother. "Listen," said Bessie. Both listened intently, and in a minute they heard a sharp, twittering sound, as of a bird in distress.

"I believe it is a bird," said Jack, "let us see if we can find where it is."

They looked around, but could see nothing. At last Bessie said, "I believe it is quite near us now, do you hear it?"

He did, and hastening forward saw a sight which filled his kind heart with pity, and brought the tears to Bessie's eyes.

It was a poor little bird with its foot caught in some string which was tangled in a branch. It was flapping its wings and trying to get free, but in vain.

"Can't you get it out, Jack?" said Bessie, who had great faith in her brother's powers.

"Yes, I think I can, but what would I put it in?" queried Jack.

"We have an old cage at home, haven't we?" asked Bessie, "shall I go for it?"

"Oh yes, only don't be long."

Off ran Bessie, while Jack tried to think of some way of freeing the poor little bird, without hurting it any more, and had just succeeded, and was holding it tenderly in his hands when Bessie returned, all out of breath from running so fast.

"Here it is, here it is," she said, "I found it in the shed, and what a surprise it will be for mother!"

She set the cage on the ground, and under Jack's instructions put some soft grass and moss on the bottom, then Jack laid the little bird carefully on it.

"Now, I think it is time to go home," said Jack.

They went as quickly as possible on account of the bird.

Mrs. Warren had just sat down for a few minutes' rest after a busy day, waiting for her husband to return from his work, when Bessie came running in breathless and excited, a little ahead of Jack.

"Mother, mother, see what Jack has got," she cried all in a breath.

Mrs. Warren was a good deal surprised at this, and got up to see what it all meant, when Jack came in and laid the cage on the table, where he surveyed it with an anxious eye.

"Where did you get it, sonny?" inquired his mother.

"Found it, mother," and Jack told all about it, ending up with a request to keep it.

"Well, I don't know about that," said Mrs. Warren.

"But its poor little leg is hurt, mother," said Jack and Bessie, both together.

"Well, I guess you can keep it, and nurse it well," said their mother, with a smile.

The children thanked her, and then bound up the bird's foot with soft linen. Jack gave it some crum led bread and a little water, which it ate gratefully and with apparent relish.

Just then, Mr. Warren came in, and of course the story had to be told to him also.

"It is a wild cary," he said, in answer to a question from Jack; "and," he added, "it has evidently been in that state for some time."

Jack and Bessie expressed their feelings in sighs and sighs of sympathy and regret.

They all sat down to tea then, and immediately after this important business was over, the two went to look at their pet, who seemed so weak and languid as to be scarcely able to hold up its poor little head. However, in a day or two it began to recover from the effects of its exhaustion and exposure, and became very tame. It would eat from the children's hands, and was apparently as fond of them as they were of it.

And, indeed, poor Bessie began to dread the time when it must be set free, for mother and father both agreed that it would be cruel to keep a wild bird in a cage.

Many an anxious discussion had Jack and Bessie about what would become of it when it was set at liberty, and Bessie often said, "I wonder if it has any mother or father to go to?" and Jack would answer, "Of course," so Bessie was comforted.

At last the much dreaded time arrived, and very unwillingly Bessie admitted that Pip (as they had named the bird) was no longer an invalid, so going out into the garden, Jack held the cage in his hand, with his finger on the latch of the door, Bessie looking on with fast-filling eyes.

Jack opened the door, and birdie flew away to the branch of a tree near by, evidently rejoicing in its liberty.

"Good-bye, Pip, good-bye," murmured Bessie, and as they went slowly back to the house they tried hard to be brave, for they felt the loss of their pet very sorely.

Mother sympathized with them, and said all she could to comfort them.

They could not bear to look at the empty cage, so they put it on the shelf out of sight.

They found it hard work to go to sleep that night, being so full of the thought of where their little foundling was now, and if it had found a nice nest to sleep in.

When the children woke up next morning they did not hasten so eagerly downstairs as usual, knowing that they would not be welcomed by a cheerful chirp from their pet bird. But a delightful surprise awaited them!

Upon entering the kitchen their mother met them with a smile. "There is an old friend of yours at the door who is waiting to see you," she said. The children stared at each other, wondering who it could possibly be!

"Come and see!" said their mother, opening the door, and they could scarcely believe their eyes!

There, hopping around on the ground, was their little Pip, who, as soon as it saw them, flew up and alighted on Bessie's shoulder, chirping round into her face as much as to say, "Is breakfast ready? I'm hungry."

No words can express the delight of the children. Jack flew for the cage, and putting fresh water and seed in the little vessels, and a lump of sugar for a treat, he hung it in its old place and left the door open, so that the bird could see it.

He held Pip up as high as he could, and it flew in, and began eating its breakfast, while Bessie ran for a fresh bunch of chickweed for dessert.

So interested were the children that Mrs. Warren could scarcely induce them to come to their own breakfast, and their father and mother hardly recognized in them the same solemn little couple of the previous evening. By their parents' advice, they left the cage door open so that the bird could go in and out freely, but they had the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing that by their kindness they had completely won the confidence of the little stranger, and that as the winter season drew near it became more and more tame, so that when they brought the cage in for the winter, little Pip was once more their "Willing Captive."

Hamilton, Ont.

DO YOU MEAN IT, BOYS?

BY J. MERVIN HULL.

THERE are two incidents connected with one of the playmates of my boyhood days which I remember very clearly. The first occurred during our early school-days.

It was Friday afternoon, when our division was called upon to "speak pieces," and as the teacher spoke his name, John stepped lightly upon the platform. I can see every feature of his face as well as if I had his photograph before me. His fresh, boyish cheeks were flushed with the excitement of facing the pupils, his form was erect, and his dark eyes flashed as he began to recite, in a clear musical voice, N. P. Willis' fine poem, "A Spell of Madness." I can see again the untrained but earnest gestures with which he emphasized the solemn warning of the last verse:

"Then dash the brimming cup aside,
And spill its purple wine;
Take not its madness to thy lips,
Let not its curse be thine.
'Tis red and rich but grief and woe
Lie hid those purple depths below."

The speaker and poem impressed me so much that the scene became fixed in my memory, to be sadly recalled in later years.

While we were still boys, John went with his parents to live in another State, and it was, perhaps, fifteen years before I saw him again.

While on a journey, I stepped from a train at a railroad junction, and the first person I saw was John. I recognized him instantly, and yet he was fearfully changed. His youthful form was distended to the unhealthy fullness of the beer drinker; his cheeks looked puffy and unwholesome, and his dull, watery eyes sought the ground when I gave him an old-time greeting as I hurried along to catch my train. The sad story of his downward career was plainly written upon him from head to foot, and as the train bore me swiftly away, I remembered our boyhood days, and I wished that John had not forgotten the poem that he recited so well.

Perhaps this sketch will be read by many boys who are learning just such pieces to

•speak. Thousands of you are gathered into temperance organizations, where you march to temperance music, carry temperance banners, sing temperance songs, speak temperance pieces, and are taught the dangers of alcohol. Boys, do you mean it? Are you in earnest about these things, or do they become a mere routine of exercises which you mean to cast off by-and-by? If you are in earnest about these things, they will become a wall of protection to keep the tempter from you by-and-by; but if you are careless and forgetful, will it be strange if some follow in the footsteps of poor John?

ON BEING PLEASANT.

SAYS Mr. Thackeray about that nice boy, Clive Newcome, "I don't know that Clive was especially brilliant, but he was pleasant."

Occasionally we meet people to whom it seems to come natural to be pleasant; such are as welcome wherever they go as flowers in May, and the most charming thing about them is that they help to make other people pleasant too. Their pleasantness is contagious.

The other morning we were in the midst of a three days' rain. The fire smoked, the dining-room was chilly, and when we assembled for breakfast, papa looked rather grim and mamma tired, for the baby had been restless all night. Polly was plainly inclined to fretfulness, and Bridget was undeniably cross, when Jack came in with the breakfast rolls from the baker's. He had taken off his rubber coat and boots in the entry, and he came in rosy and smiling.

"Here's the paper, sir," said he to his father with such a cheerful tone that his father's brow relaxed, and he said, "Ah, Jack, thank you," quite pleasantly.

His mother looked up at him smiling, and he just touched her cheek gently as he passed.

"The top of the morning to you, Polly-wog," he said to his little sister, and delivered the rolls to Bridget with a "Here you are, Bridget. Aren't you sorry you didn't go to get them yourself this beautiful day?"

He gave the fire a poke and opened a damper. The smoke ceased, and presently the coals began to glow, and five minutes after Jack came in we had gathered around the table and were eating our oatmeal as cheerily as possible. This seems very simple in the telling, and Jack never knew he had done anything at all, but he had in fact changed the whole moral atmosphere of the room and had started a gloomy day pleasantly for five people.

"He is always so," said his mother when I spoke to her about it afterwards, "just so sunny and kind and ready all the time. I suppose there are more brilliant boys in the world than mine, but none with a kinder heart or a sweeter temper; I am sure of that."

And I thought, "Why isn't such a disposition worth cultivating? Isn't it one's duty to be pleasant, just as well as to be honest or truthful, or industrious or generous? And yet, while are there a good many honest, truthful, industrious, and generous souls in the world, and people who are unselfish too after a fashion, a person who is habitually pleasant is rather a rarity. I suppose the reason is because it is such hard work to act pleasant when one feels cross.

People whose dispositions are naturally irritable or unhappy think it is no use trying to be otherwise; but that is a mistake. Anyone can be pleasant who wants to. If one will patiently and perseveringly try to keep always pleasant, after a while one will get in the habit of smiling instead of frowning, of looking bright instead of surly, and of giving a kind word instead of a cross one. And if some of the boys who read this should chance to be of the kind who only act pleasant when they feel like it, I wish they would think of what I say, and try and see if I am not right. And the beauty of it is, as I said before, that pleasantness is catching, and before long they may find themselves in the midst of a circle full of bright and happy people, where everyone is as good-natured and contented as they are.