

Youths' Department.

VOLNEY BEKNER: A TRUE NARRATIVE.

Volney Bekner was the son of a poor Irish sailor, and was born about the year 1748. He was taught little of what ought to be known by those destined to live in a city; but as soon as he could regulate his own movements, his father taught him to struggle with the waves, or to allow himself to be born away with them, laughing at the storms of the air and the fury of the sea. You should have seen the father of Volney with his son, then about three years of age, in the water; the father supporting with one arm the little child, and the latter endeavouring to imitate the movements of his father, and to turn and return upon the water, until he would be exhausted with fatigue. Volney Bekner, soon became an indefatigable swimmer, for scarcely was he five years old, when he could follow the vessel on which he had been brought up, for the distance of two leagues. Thus accustomed to make a sport of the dangers of the sea, Volney Bekner became an important personage, especially in stormy weather. None of the crew could man the yards with such rapidity; he was always the first to ascend the mast, always the most prompt in gliding amongst the rigging; and if his arms were not the strongest in executing the evolutions, his example was so encouraging that each one seemed to redouble his emulation, not to be conquered by the intrepidity of so young a child. Moreover, Volney Bekner was often able to render great services by himself alone. Sometimes but a slight effort is required to free a rope which interferes with the working of the sails: he sprang with greater rapidity than a man could have done; he made his way through places where it would have been impossible for a man to have passed; and, quick in receiving the word of command, and skillful in executing it, with a turn of the hand Volney had repaired the mischief. Submissive to all the privations of his adventurous calling, accustomed to look dangers in the face without emotion, the young sailor, who was a moral of obedience and courage, early understood that to be worthy of attaining a rank—that is to say, to have the right of commanding in his turn—it was not sufficient that he should inspire those under his command with respect, and show himself the bravest among them; he must also be best informed, in order to deserve their confidence. His father could only teach him to be a brave man; and on this point the education of Volney Bekner was perfect. His captain undertook to make him a well-informed man, and by the age of twelve he had attained the rank of head of the pilot apprentices. He had double rations and double pay. "If," said the commander of the vessel, "this little fellow continues to conduct himself with the same bravery and prudence, he will, I am sure, attain a position far above mine." Then turning towards Volney Bekner he added, "Is it not true, my lad, that you love glory?"—"Yes, captain," respectfully replied the child.—"And do you know what glory is?" added the captain.—"It is," replied the child, "faithfully to serve one's country, and honourably to fulfil the duties of one's station."

During a voyage from Port au Prince to France, it happened that the daughter of a rich American, who was on board with her father and governess, had made her escape from the latter, who had fallen asleep. The little girl imprudently went upon the deck; she played, she ran about: she got her feet entangled in the ropes, fell down and rose again, laughing at the accident; she faced the billows, that covered her with spray, and she laughed still louder than before. The sailors told her to take care, but the child foresaw no danger; she leaned over the deck,—the vessel heaved, the little American lost her balance, uttered a shriek, and disappeared beneath the waters. A sailor, perceiving her fall, immediately leaped into the sea, plunged, and swimming for a few fathoms, caught the imprudent child, and reappeared with her upon the surface of the waves. The sailor was the father of Volney Bekner. But, in the mean time, the wind had veered, and although but a few minutes had elapsed since the intrepid swimmer had plunged into the water to rescue the child from inevitable death, the vessel was already a considerable distance from him. Nevertheless he still swam on; a few efforts more and he would restore to the arms of a despairing father, who awaited him on the deck, the child whom he had believed lost to him forever. All at once the sailor stopped, and ceased following the direct line; he struggled with the waves to take a contrary direction, and shouted—"Help! help! a shark!" It was, indeed, one of those voracious and monstrous animals, that was coming direct towards him, and threatened to devour both deliverer and child whom he held firm-

ly pressed against his breast. The whole of the crew were assembled upon deck; they fired at the shark, but the monster was undismayed, and continued to pursue his double prey, which he unceasingly harassed. The sailor increased his speed; but the shark swam still faster, and every moment gained upon his victim. All who beheld this sight were struck with horror; the despair of the American, who thus saw his child about to perish before his eyes, amounted to madness; he wanted to throw himself into the water but the crew restrained him; he offered the whole of his fortune to any one who would kill the monster; no one dared to attempt so perilous an enterprise; but at the very moment when the unfortunate father believed himself abandoned by God and man, young Volney Bekner was seen in the distance, gliding beneath the shark, and thrusting into his body, up to the hilt, a large and sharp dagger with which he was armed. No one had seen him plunge into the sea; and if he was now recognized, it was by the velocity of his course through the water; for Volney Bekner was so skillful in this kind of exercise, that he seemed more like a cavalier borne upon a fiery steed, than a man swimming. The shark, dreadfully wounded, ceased to pursue the sailor, but only to direct his fury against a new victim; he allowed not a moment's respite to him who had struck him. By a generous impulse, Volney Bekner, fearing lest the monster might hesitate between him and his father, directed his course away from the vessel, whilst the sailor, who still protected the little American, gained the ship. However stout a swimmer our young pilot might be, it was impossible for him to maintain a lengthened contest with his terrible enemy. When he perceived that his father had seized the rope thrown to him, he then thought of his own safety. Darting from right to left in oblique lines, in order to embarrass the enemy, who was close upon him, he succeeded in reaching the rope. "He is saved!" was shouted with enthusiasm from the deck. The rope was hastily drawn in, and already had it reached the height of fifteen feet above the surface of the water, when the shark who had just disappeared, and had only dived, to take a more vigorous spring, darted in pursuit of the heroic boy, caught him by the middle of the body, and snapped it in two. Thus died in 1769, in the twelfth year of his age, a youth as remarkable for his wonderful daring as for the gentle virtues of obedience, filial devotion, and a martyr-like fortitude of spirit.—From the French of Michael Masson.

News Department.

ENGLAND.

MR. GLADSTONE'S LECTURE.*

Coming to the second question—How are our colonies to be governed? Mr. Gladstone found a reply in the principle afforded by the Greeks, as related in the History Colonisation by the Hellenic race, and which might be summed up in the terms "perfect freedom, and perfect self-government." Tracing the history of our own colonies from the golden age in the reign of the Stuarts, through the silver ages, just previous to the American war, followed by the brazen age in 1783, Mr. Gladstone brought it down to 1840, when better things began to dawn. "In this (the brazen age)," he continued, "the principle was that through a foolish and obnoxious interference a generous nature should be prevented from taking her own way, and should be taught to take our way, to perfection. The idea came to be, that it was absolutely necessary that from a certain spot in the city of London the local affairs of the colonies should be directed. It was thought that we, in England, must retain in our hands, and on no account give to our colonies, the disposal of the wild lands of the colonies; that besides the taxes raised by the colonists themselves to support the local government, we must have another set of revenues, called Crown Revenues; that we must keep little standing armies in the colonies at a great expense, and with the certainty of a great decrease in the efficiency of the army. It was in consequence of this that the army of England, when on the peace establishment, though small in number, had never been able to make a show in the field, even proportioned to those reduced numbers. Another mistaken notion of colonial policy was that they should be required to establish a civil list—a certain range of salaries for their judges, governors, and other officers, as if it was supposed that the colonists would be such barbarians that they would not recognize the necessity of having government, law, and order. If they did understand government, law, and order, they would provide judges and governors for themselves;

(* Concluded from last week.)

but if they did not understand them, the way taken by England was not likely to make them understand them. (Cheers.) Another matter was that England established for each colony a certain tariff of differential duties; she used to require the American colony to pay an extra price for West Indian sugar, and the West Indians to pay an extra price for American wool, instead of making it an interchange of freedom. Another notion was that it was necessary for England to nominate a legislative council for the colonies, as if she had an interest in the regulation of the debates of the colony separate from the people of the colony. Then, again, we used to interfere continually with their laws; their bills were sent home and frequently vetoed, though they were perfectly suited for the colonies. And, lastly, we exercised patronage in those colonies, appointing to offices abroad a set of men who were not quite presentable at home, but who were thought quite good enough to hold offices with substantial salaries in some colony. How did this modern colonial policy come into operation? They must consider, first, of what the colonies consisted—of three classes, of none of which free institutions would be very useful; they were slave colonies, conquered colonies, and penal colonies. England had no free colonies then, therefore he was far from greatly censuring the statesmen of the time when this system came into vogue. He thought it was the fault or the consequence of the American war. There was no man more likely than Mr. Pitt to extend a free system of government to our colonies, if circumstances were favourable; but they were not, because the colonies were not free, and on account of the war just concluded. Those were unavoidable evils and calamities. But what were the consequences of the policy he had been describing? He would only mention one—the rebellion of Canada in 1837 and 1838, when the colonists took up arms to enforce a number of demands, not one of which would have been refused by England two hundred years or one hundred and fifty years before. To say nothing of the strife and bitterness caused by this rebellion, it cost England £4,000,000 or £5,000,000, and, almost immediately after the rebellion was put down, she began to concede all the demands made by the colonists one after another, not from terror, but because, on looking at them seriously, they were found to be for the interest of that colony. Its interest could not clash with ours: the interest of England was in the prosperity of Canada, and the best way to the affections of the colonists was by doing that which promoted that prosperity. There was only one other case illustrating the consequence of the meddling colonial policy to which he would allude. In Lower Canada the people, who consisted chiefly of Frenchmen, resisted us, rose in arms, and were put down by our soldiery. Some time after, in 1848, a bill was introduced in Canada, called the Canada Rebellion Losses Bill, the object of which was to give compensation at the public expense to some of those who had suffered losses in the rebellion in resisting the Queen's troops. This would surely be a very bad precedent. What effect would it have on the authority of law and the discipline of the army if, after rebels had been put down, they were to be compensated by Act of Parliament for their losses? But look at it from the rebels' point of view. They said they rebelled for matters which the Government had since decided to be necessary for them. Here was a difficulty, and he felt it to be so. Many good men thought the bill ought to pass, and it did pass; and England was obliged to put her dignity into her pocket. (Cheers and laughter.) The general effect of the continuance of this false system of governing the colonies in Downing-street was to alienate the hearts of the people from this country. A number of people in each colony, consisting of the Government officers and their immediate friends, and sometimes a newspaper or two, called themselves the British party, while all the rest of the community were anti-British. The little body of official men, with another little body of individuals picked out of the community, were pulling and tugging one way, supported by the British Government, and on the other side was the whole of the community. That was the way in which the colonies had been managed. Now this was all changed, and the principle was fully recognized that the local affairs of free colonies should be administered by themselves. He was glad now to discharge a debt of justice, for there were men in advance of their fellow-legislators in respect of the colonies. He mentioned them because he differed from them in political opinions, and, moreover, as the time of the greatest political freedom, in the reign of Charles II., which he had mentioned, was an eminently Tory time, he thought he should render their due to persons of an opposite—namely, a