

Our Young Folks.

TOM SLUG.

"This will never do, Tom," said Mr. Benjamin Slug, as he read his son's school-report for another term. "You must really rouse up, or you'll never make a man of yourself."

Mr. Slug had got on in the world by acting on the motto, "Labor conquers everything," and thus from an office-boy he had risen to the head of the firm. Justly proud of his own success, and knowing its secret, he was very anxious his son should follow in his steps. To this end he had put him to the best schools, and given him every chance of a good education. But the burden of every report was the same: "The lad has good natural abilities, and would make a splendid scholar had he application"—a polite way of saying that Tom was lazy.

There was a picture in his bedroom of a field in a wilderness state of briars and thorns. Part of it had been originally inclosed as a vineyard; but it was now covered with nettles, and the vines were overrun with foxes, finding ready entrance by the ruined wall. In one corner of the vineyard was a lodge, the latticed window showing the drowsy keeper within, murmuring now and again, as he turned from side to side: "Yet a little sleep and a little slumber, then will I arise and till my field and trim my vines." In the dim distance, the grim, gaunt, hungry-looking figure of Poverty was seen steadily approaching. Tom often looked at this picture, but hitherto had not fully learned its lesson.

He was a thoughtful boy in his way, and sometimes philosophized a bit about his lazy tendencies. Indeed, he was a philosopher in petticoats; for he would sometimes argue to himself in this way: "My name is Slug. Why, it's the name of that slimy, gliding thing on the garden walks! I wonder if the family got its name—as Edward Longshanks got his, from his long legs—from the slowness of some member, reminding people of a slug? If so, how can I help being sluggish?—it's in the blood."

He had yet to learn that men are born into the world like colts, and need breaking-in to be of full use.

The boy was quick with his eyes, however, if slow with his hands and feet. He had picked up a good deal, in this way, about beasts and birds and flies and creeping things. On this memorable afternoon he was fresh from a book about the Termites or "white ants," found in Africa, which build nests twelve feet high, some on the ground, shaped like pointed haycocks or huge mushrooms; and some in trees, shaped like sugar-casks, with a covered-way to them, winding round the trunk, from the ground.

There was a seriousness in his father's tone as he begged Tom to free himself from the growing slavery of indolence by one grand effort, which made him feel very miserable and disgusted with himself. In this mood he wandered into the orchard, and threw himself down under a tree. It was a beautiful summer evening. The slanting sunlight barred the grass with long shafts of green and gold. Hard by, a little stream made music as it ran. The air was thronged with insects, dancing away their little day in the sunset hour. Tom could not help feeling the beauty of the scene. And some sense of sweetness would mingle with the bitterness that found vent in his tears. When these had ceased, his eye chanced to fall on a nest of ants, the inmates of which were very busy around him, some repairing the nest, others guarding it, and others carrying stores into it.

As he watched them, the nest began to grow sensibly bigger, until it seemed as if he could walk up and down in it. Tom thought this was a splendid chance of exploring an ant-hill, and making up to the nest, was about to enter, when two of the guards rushed out clashing their jaws so fiercely that he felt quite frightened. He was still more startled, however, when one of them asked him what he wanted. On recovering himself, he made bold to ask if he might be allowed to see over the nest. The guards conversed for a moment, and then one of them went inside, and presently returned with a kindly, motherly-looking aunt, who said: "The Queen has been pleased to grant your request, and appointed me your guide. Please stop this way."

The entrance opened into a kind of hall, which again narrowed into a lobby, having

a pillar at the entrance, midway between the walls. Seeing Tom look wonderingly at this pillar, the guide told him it was to make the nest easier of defence when attacked. "You see," she said, "a couple of ants could keep a whole army at bay here."

Tom thought it a most skillful device. Passing through this lobby, they came to another hall, much larger than the first, with pillars here and there, to support the roof. "This is the grand assembly-room," said the guide.

Then she led him into another lobby, having a row of cells on each side. Thence they mounted a staircase, and passed through a gallery, which also had rows of cells on each side. There was something, or somebody, in every cell.

Now and again, they met a long string of ants bearing burdens. The leader of one of these—a big jaw ant—seized Tom with his nippers as they were passing, and would have made them meet in his flesh, had not the guide signalled that he was a friend.

Tom might have grown weary with his long tramp, but for some entertaining accounts of other ant-nests by the guide. She described one hollowed out of the branches and twigs of a thorn-tree for the sake of honey hidden there; another purse-shaped, made by gluing leaves together while on the tree; and another, stranger still, made by dried cakes of refuse, arranged like tiles on the branches of a tree, one large cake forming the roof.

As they came to one cell, a joyous company passed out, having among them a large ant of very stately bearing.

"The Queen! the Queen!" cried the guide. "Isn't she a right noble lady?"

Tom took note how very devoted and attentive the ants were to their Queen. Her bodyguard lifted her gently over all rough places; and when the royal party met a troop of working-ants, the latter divided and saluted the former as it passed along.

Turning into the cell the Queen had just left, they saw the floor covered with the smallest eggs Tom had ever seen. They were scarcely bigger than a pin-point. "But come this way," said the guide, "and I'll show you the nursery."

This was one of the coziest cells in the whole nest. Here, ranged against the walls, like classes in a school, were rows upon rows of small, white, legless grubs. They looked like tiny sugar-loaves, and were made up of eleven or twelve rings. Every little creature had its nurse, who was either feeding it or washing it, or just taking it out for an airing, or brieftly resting it.

"What in the world are these funny little things?" asked Tom.

"Why, they have come out of eggs like those you saw just now; and if spared, will be full-grown ants some day.—Now you must see the spinning-room." So saying, the guide led Tom across a passage into another cell.

Here a number of fine fat grubs were spinning gauze dresses for themselves, which were to shroud their bodies from top to toe. A few were spinning an additional coat of silk to put over the gauze dress.

"These are their night-gowns," said the guide. "And the moment they are covered from head to foot, they will go to sleep for a month or six weeks without waking."

Tom thought that would be nice.

The spinning-room led to the dormitory. Here Tom saw what at first looked like piles of broken twigs and tiny balls of silk; but when he examined the bits of stick more closely, he could trace the face and limbs of an insect through the gauze-covering. They looked, for all the world, like the pictured mummies he had seen in books. The guards in the room looked rather savagely at Tom when he entered; but a glance from the guide made all right.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Persevering Boy.

The month of December in the year 1807 was unusually cold and blustering. In some instances, cattle and swine poorly sheltered were found badly frozen; winter had come on so suddenly that many were unprepared for it, while the effect of such severity in the weather so early in the season was disastrous in young and old.

There was one exception, however, and this was a youth of fifteen summers, tall and gaunt, who sat one stormy evening in the old fashioned chimney corner of his father's humble dwelling reflecting upon his

own situation, and planning what he would do to improve it. There was one fixed purpose in his mind, and that was, to get an education. How to accomplish it he could not imagine, for though his will was as inflexible as iron, his power of conception was not yet developed. He had been to a school in the neighborhood the previous winter, but this avenue to learning was now closed to him. As he sat on the old fashioned stool amid the noise and confusion of the family around him, and the hoarse sighing of the tempest without, his thoughts were something of this nature: "Winter has commenced, I long to be at my studies. The best part of the year, and the only time I can call my own, is passing away; what shall I do?"

As if in answer to this question, there was a knock at the door, and presently a neighbor walked in covered with snow. He had been to a village beyond, and was returning to his home, when the light of the pine knots attracted his attention.

Our youth in the corner nodded good evening to the guest, but his mind was too deeply absorbed to listen to the chit-chat which followed. The great question, "What next?" was still undecided, and his brow knit more and more, as he reflected on the difficulties in his path, which, however, not for one moment deterred him from pursuing it.

Presently he was roused by a voice. "Jo, did you hear Jo? There is a school in Plainfield. Neighbor G—— says it's a good one, taught by Master Maynard."

Jo rose slowly from his seat, a look of cool resolve stamped on every feature.

"I shall go to Plainfield in the morning," he said quietly.

"But how can you get there? It'll be awfully drifted, the snow is a foot deep now, and the wind blows a gale."

"I'll get there somehow, I reckon." "But, remonstrated his father, "I don't see the way for you to go to Plainfield. I can't pay for your board or schooling, much as I'd like to do it."

"I know that, father, but I'm determined to have an education."

Bidding the family good night he mounted to his humble chamber in the loft, saying to himself "Yes that's the next step. I'll go to Plainfield, and I'll go to-morrow. What's a few drifts of snow to me, when I'm determined to get where I can be at my books? Perhaps this Master Maynard will help me to contrive a way to get an education."

The next morning the thermometer was down to zero, and the banks in front of the house covered the stone walls; but not one whit daunted, our friend started off as soon as it was light, a small package of clothes and books slung over his shoulder with a stick, in search of "larnin," as his father called it.

On entering the schoolroom in season to see that the fires were sufficient for the severity of the day, Master Maynard observed sitting on a bench, and warming himself by the blazing logs, a youth whom he had never seen before. There was an expression on his brown face which fixed the attention of the teacher, and the following conversation took place.

"Have you come to join the school?" "Yes sir, I have walked seven miles this morning to do it."

"Are you acquainted with any one in Plainfield?"

"No sir, but I mean to get an education. I heard last night that you were teaching a school here; and I came to get you to help me contrive a plan."

"Cannot your parents assist you?" "No sir."

"Have you no friends to lend you a helping hand?"

"No."

"How then do you expect to get along?" "Don't know. I thought I'd come and see you about it—I'm determined to get learning before I'm much older."

There was something in the resolute manner in which he undertook to conquer difficulties that interested the teacher. He told the stranger to remain through the day; and he would see what could be done. Before night he had made arrangements in the fam-

ily where he was boarding, that the young man should remain, paying his expenses by labor out of school hours.

Our friend now gave himself diligently to study, and soon convinced his teacher that, though not possessed of brilliant talents, his will to acquire knowledge was indomitable. Through the winter he made good but not rapid progress, and so much interested his teacher by his perseverance that at the close of the term that gentleman made arrangements with a clergyman who resided four miles from his father's house to hear his recitations.

At last he was prepared for college and the theological school, being one of the earliest members of the Seminary in Andover, from which place he went to Greece as a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

I scarcely need say that I have given the early history of Dr. Jonas King, whose indomitable perseverance amidst discouragements and persecutions has done so much for the redemption and Christianization of Greece, and has excited the admiration of the whole Christian world.

The Little Housekeeper.

I suppose you know that nearly all kinds of birds take their flight to a warmer part of the country in the far distant South, upon the approach of cold weather, and come back to us again with the opening days of spring. Among these are the blackbirds. But one winter, not many years ago, in a lodging camp away up in the Minnesota Pineries, where the weather is very cold in midwinter, two blackbirds remained all winter, making their home in the building used as a stable for the oxen. The rough lumbermen, who had never known of a case like this before, were pleased and were kind to the little birds; the man who had charge of the camp and cooked for the stalwart choppers scattered crumbs for them in generous quantities near the camp door, and the birds soon learned to expect their food at regular times each day.

When the weather was extremely cold the little birds kept in the stable (or, as the men call it, "hovel") all through the day. That is, they would "sit in the barn to keep themselves warm and hide their heads under their wings—poor things." And when the oxen were driven home from their work in the evening, the birds would hail them with cries of welcome, and alight on the warm backs of the oxen and nestle down in the thick bushy hair, probably to warm their toes. And every night they slept on their chosen perch, nestled down snugly on the backs of the good-natured beasts, who either did not care or were unaware of their presence. In sunny days they flew about alighting in the tall pines and on the big log building—which the men call the "camp"—but never, during all that long winter, did they go far away from their chosen home.

What Shall a Boy Read?

There are one or two boy papers of good moral tone. The heroes are not exaggerated, and the adventures are not improbable. If the story is of mining, the author gives some valuable information in regard to minerals and how to mine. If it is of hunting you are taught how to make snares and traps, and are given the principles of taxonomy. If it is of boating you are taught the principles of sailing and rowing. If it is of the sea you are given the correct names of ropes and yards and sails, and the habits and traits of the people of other countries are correctly stated.

There are few boy books which are true to every-day life. Take these, and if you have further time take history, or something else which is certain to return some benefit—a daily paper—with its news from every foreign country—its home happenings—its discussions of all matters of interest—its incidents and accidents, its geography, history, grammar and orthography combined.

Man may realize that the wickedness of his heart is always exposed to God, without a shudder, but if one little fault becomes exposed to his neighbor, he is cast down into the bottomless depths of despair.