

The Child in the Midst.

BY CHRISTIAN BURKE.

THERE stood a tiny convent,
So olden legends run,
In a green and fertile meadow
Of which, when day was done,
The children made a playground,
And frolicked in the sun.

But the old monks spoke complaining:
"They drive all thought away,
In the woods the birds keep singing
Throughout the live-long day,
And the laughter of the children
Disturbs us when we pray."

Then spake the kind old abbot:
"The woodland music sweet,
The sound of little voices,
And the tramp of childish feet,
Are surely sent to gladden
And hallow our retreat."

"They bring with them a blessing,
These happy guileless things;
When I catch the children's laughter,
Or when some small bird sings,
I think upon the angels
And hear their rustling wings."

"For myself I love the children,"
The abbot said and smiled,
"Amid a world of evil
They as yet walk undefiled,
A likeness of the Saviour
Who for us became a child."

"I love to watch them flitting
To and fro among the trees,
And to feel their clasping fingers
As they cling about my knees.
And they who enter heaven
Must be even such as these."

"They have taught me many a lesson,
For their pure and earnest eyes
Read many a mystery hidden
From the world-worn and the wise,
For they were lately walking
In the fields of Paradise."

"He who 'suffered' little children
Loves and watches o'er them still;
In the green and pleasant meadows
They are safe from every ill;
Should we drive them hence, my brethren,
Are we sure we do his will?"

"Our eyes are often holden,
Our faith is often dim,
Then bethink you well, my brothers,
Lest thro' any foolish whim
In turning from the children
We also turn from him."

Then the brothers all made answer
As each sought his silent cell,
"In the green and fertile pastures
Christ's lambs shall surely dwell.
They are welcome, Father Abbot,
For we see thou speakest well."

So the song-birds sang and mated
Beside the convent gray,
And the old monks watched the children,
And smiled upon their play,
Then found a double blessing
As they knelt to praise and pray.

And the convent grew and flourished
As a house of holy rest,
And with many a heavenly vision
Was the saintly abbot blest,
For the Lord who loved the children
Tarried always as his guest.

A LITTLE boy called out to his father, who had mounted his horse for a journey, "Good-by, papa. I love you thirty miles long!" A little sister quickly added: "Good-by, dear papa. You will never ride to the end of my love!" This is what Jesus means to say: "My love has no limit: it passeth knowledge."

Four Maine Boys.

THIRTY years ago I knew, in the town of G——, in Maine, two brothers, whose identity I will disguise under the names of Willard and Langdon Newman. In the same town I knew, also, two boys—not brothers—whom I will call Charles Smallman and George Winfast. The two former were sons of a farmer; the two latter, sons of master mechanics. The farmer lived in the outskirts of the town—in the wild country—which rendered them plebeians; the latter in the village, which made them patricians as boys saw those things.

From the time they were nine and ten years of age, Willard and Langdon had to assist in the farm-work in summer-time, and, therefore, could not attend school. They worked at planting and hoeing and haying, from five in the morning until eight or nine at night, in the longest days. In the winter, for a few years more, ten weeks at school was possible, for which they walked nearly a mile—going home for dinner between twelve and one.

When the civil war came on, times were hard in those Maine country towns. Willard and Langdon, by 1863, were compelled to leave school, and go into the forests to cut and haul wood. At fourteen the latter used to yoke his oxen before light on those short winter mornings, drive into the woods through snow from two to four feet deep, load a cord of wood—heavy sticks, four feet long—and haul it to the railway station, a mile distant. This he would do four times a day, frequently eating his dinner on a stump, with the thermometer at zero.

But all this time these two boys were occupying their few spare moments in improving their minds. Their evenings were passed around the great fireplace, where they studied their books and read the weekly papers. I have seen one or the other of them sitting on an ox-sled, on a cold winter day, reading the newspaper. Occasionally, in the fall, they would still attend a part-term at the academy, and thus, amid hardships and privations, prepared themselves to be teachers.

They had brown faces; big, rough hands; and wore old clothes, frequently much patched; in summer went "barefoot;" and in winter wore great, heavy, cowhide boots.

The village boys, Charles and George, were little dandies. Their parents supported them in idleness. They had every opportunity to attend school—an opportunity which they improved but little. They "looked-down" on the farmer-boys, made fun of their old clothes, called them "Shadagees;" and, because they were known to be studious, nicknamed Langdon "Little Wisdom." So every time he went to the village, George and Charles would call out to him: "Hello, Little Wisdom! How are things over in Shadagee? Taters all dug?" or something equally tantalizing.

At last hard times overtook the two patricians. One lost his father, and the father of the other failed, and they had to go to work. They had not education enough to enable them to enter on any of the more "genteel" pursuits, and no trades. When I visited the town last summer, both were trying to scrape a living out of little, rocky farms. They were as poor, and ragged, and dirty as ever the Shadagee boys were.

And where were the Shadagee boys, do you ask? Willard, a graduate of a Maine College, is now a successful principal of an academy in his native State. Langdon has already attained high rank in one of the professions; has written several successful books; lectured before large audiences; travelled north, south, east, and west, and in Europe.

He has been elected to positions of honour and responsibility in a large New England city. And this is "Little Wisdom," as his wife sometimes jokingly calls him.

Willard and Langdon improved their small opportunities. George and Charles neglected their great opportunities.—*Wide Awake*.

De-Legalize the Traffic, and Save the Boys.

THE Scott Act kills the treating system. Degraded men, who have acquired the drinking habit, may manage to get liquor in disreputable dives and dens, even where the law is in operation, but the boys are not tempted by the seductiveness of the open bar, and the terrible traffic is robbed of its potent attractions of joviality, warmth, good-fellowship, sparkle, light, and fun.

This fact was well brought out in reference to Maine, some time ago, by Mr. D. R. Locke, who visited the State named, to inquire into the working of prohibition.

A STRONG ARGUMENT.

Mr. Locke said: "The best argument I found in Maine for prohibition was by an editor of a paper in Portland, who was, for political reasons, mildly opposed to it. I had a conversation with him, which ran something like this:—

"Where were you born?"

"In a village about sixty miles from Bangor."

"Do you remember the condition of things prior to prohibition?"

"Distinctly. There was a vast amount of drunkenness, and consequent disorder and poverty."

"What was the effect of prohibition?"

"It shut up all the rum-shops, and practically banished liquor from the village. It became one of the most quiet and prosperous places on the globe."

"How long did you live in the village after prohibition?"

"Eleven years; or until I was twenty-one years of age."

"Then?"

"Then I went to Bangor."

"Do you drink now?"

"I never tasted a drop of liquor in my life."

"Why?"

"Up to the age of twenty-one I never saw it; and after that I did not care to take on the habit."

THEY WANT THE BOYS.

That is all there is in it. If the boys of the country are not exposed to the infernalism, the men are very sure not to be. This man and his schoolmates were saved from rum by the fact that they could not get it until they were old enough to know better. Few men are drunkards who know not the poison till after they are twenty-one. It is the youth that the whiskey and beer men want.

A Boy's Business.

It exactly suits the temperament of a real boy to be very busy about nothing. If the power, for instance, that is expended in play by a boy between the ages of eight and fourteen could be applied to some industry, we should see wonderful results. But a boy is like a galvanic battery that is not in connection with anything; he generates electricity and plays it off into the air with the most reckless prodigality. And I, for one, wouldn't have it otherwise. It is as much a boy's business to play off his energies into space as it is for a flower to blow, or a cat-bird to sing snatches of the tunes of all the other little birds.