

"Yes, what's that got to do with it."
 "You and he are pretty good friends now, aren't you?"
 "Yes."
 "How has it happened?"
 "Why, when he broke his leg, mother sent me there with things for him several times, and I had a chance to do him some little favors; and after awhile I got to liking him first-rate."
 "Don't you see now what I mean?"
 "That if I begin to do things for Christ's sake, I shall learn to love Him."
 "Exactly! If you take Jesus at His word, when He says He'll save you, and then do all you can for Him, you will be a Christian. The love will take care of itself, or, rather, He will send it in His own good time."

THE OLD YEAR'S BLESSING.

I am fading from you,
 But one draweth near,
 Called the angel guardian
 Of the coming year.

If my gifts and graces
 Coldly you forget,
 Let the New Year's angel
 Bless and crown them yet.

For we work together;
 He and I are one,
 Let him end and perfect
 All I leave undone.

I brought good desires,
 Though as yet but seeds;
 Let the New Year make them
 Blossom into deeds.

I brought joy to brighten
 Many happy days;
 Let the New Year's angel
 Turn it into praise.

If I give you sickness,
 If I brought you care,
 Let him make one patience
 And the other prayer.

Where I brought you sorrow,
 Through his care at length,
 It may rise triumphant
 Into future strength.

If I brought you plenty,
 All wealth's bounteous charms
 Shall not the new angel
 Turn them into alms?

I gave health and leisure,
 Skill to dream and plan;
 Let him make them nobler
 Work for God and man.

If I broke your idols,
 Showed you they were dust,
 Let him turn the knowledge
 Into heavenly trust.

If I brought temptation,
 Let sin die away,
 Into boundless pity
 For all hearts that stray.

If your list of errors
 Dark and long appears,
 Let this new born monarch
 Melt them into tears.

May you hold this angel
 Dearer than the last—
 So I bless his future
 While he crowns my past.

Adelaide A. Proctor.

BENNY'S RED FLAG.

The station-master, in his gold lace cap and cuffs, is such a grand, important person, issuing orders to an army of porters and guards and clerks; yet he was once only a little poor country boy, who could not read or write; and this is the story of the brave deed he performed, which was the stepping-stone to his present position.

Ever since he could remember, Benny's great ambition had been to work on the line. The great

iron-way, with its shrieking, roaring traffic, which ran past his door, was to Benny the grandest thing in the world. He lived in a gate-keeper's cottage on a lonely moor, through which the railway passed. His father had been a sailor, drowned at sea, and he lived with his mother and his old grandfather, who had been a porter. Now, in his old age, he was put in charge of the gates of the level crossing, where the road from Crowcombe crossed the line. It was easy work, for the road was not much frequented, except on market days, when the country folk went into Crowcombe. Great was Benny's joy when he grew big enough to open and shut the heavy barriers all by himself.

It was a very quiet life there on the moorland, with the pink heather and golden brown underfoot in summer, and the great white clouds sailing by overhead. When Benny was quite small he had fancied that they were the smoke of all the trains, which had collected up there.

Then in winter, when the snow covered the dead fern like a mantle, and the wind came sweeping up from the sea, the moor was lonely indeed. But the silence was ever broken, summer and winter, night and day, by the regular rush of the trains. Benny would watch them open-mouthed, tearing by like live things, crowded with people, or lumbering on laden with goods or coal. Then at night they would flare by like comets, with blazing furnaces, spitting sparks, with the long line of lighted carriages flashing after it like a tail. That was to Benny a grand and awesome sight.

But one day trouble fell on the quiet cottage. Grandfather fell down speechless in a fit, and when Benny and his mother had put him to bed, there was nothing for it but for the latter to set off to Crowcombe for a doctor, leaving Benny in charge of the gates. He felt very proud of his responsibility, and quite longed for the evening to come when the market people would be returning, that he might have occasion to exercise his new duties. The afternoon wore on and his mother did not return, and grandfather lay just the same. Benny knew it must be nearly tea-time, for the four o'clock goods train rumbled by, passing the passenger train at the entrance to the cutting, as it always did every day. Benny peeped in again on grandfather, and then wandered back to the gates. The sun was sinking low across the moor.

Suddenly a sound of a horse galloping, and the noise of wheels, mingled with shouts came down the road. The shouting ceased, the horse and cart came nearer, and Benny ran to open the first gate.

Scarcely had he done so when a runaway horse, in a gig without a driver, came tearing down the hill. Benny hesitated a moment as to whether to leave the further gate shut to stop him. While he hesitated the horse came rushing through the gate, and stumbling over the rails, crashed down with the cart a-top of him. There he lay kicking and plunging. What was to be done?

Benny looked up the hill. There was no sign of any driver running. Benny looked at the horse. How could he possibly get him up, or move the cart alone?

Even as he looked a thought came into his mind which made his heart stand still with horror. Leaving the struggling horse, he ran back into the cottage, and looked up at the clock.

A quarter to five! It was at this time the afternoon express always passed, and the horse and cart were on the line! A few minutes more and the train would dash upon them, and there would be a fearful accident.

For an instant Benny felt powerless before the dreadful danger he saw threatening. He was such a little boy, so weak and helpless. But the next moment a thought struck him, which surely must have been sent him from One above, who sees all.

Seizing the red flag in the corner, which was used to denote danger, Benny tore off bearheaded down the line as fast as he could run.

Even as he ran a faint far-off rushing sound told him the train was coming. If he could only reach the cutting and stop the express there, for once round the turn it would be upon the obstacle before it could pull up.

On Benny tore, breathless. Could he keep up? Could he be in time?

He reached the cutting, and saw at the far, far end white curls of smoke.

Never had the cutting seemed so long as with weary stumbling feet he toiled along the rough rails and stones, with his eyes fixed on the approaching mass. Nearer it came, and nearer. Raising his red flag as high as he could reach, Benny waved it furiously as he ran. On it came. Did they not see him? Were they not going to stop?

The earth rumbled under the approaching mass, which closed up the view at the end of the cutting. The whirl and whizz came nearer and nearer. Still Benny waved and ran. But no, perhaps he was too small; they did not see, or would not heed. On it came. Never had the engine looked so huge and powerful as when rushing at full speed on the brave little boy, who stood there with his feeble weapon trying to avert a great disaster.

He was just beginning to despair when a short, sharp whistle sounded, and revived his hopes. They had seen him.

He waved; they whistled again and seemed to slacken. Benny stood firm, waving the flag with both his hands, and, almost to his amazement, the mighty machine, with a sudden jarring, which was felt through all the carriages as they put on the powerful brake, slackened its speed still more, and came gliding up to where Benny stood. He had stopped the express!

The driver jumped down; guards and passengers looked out.

"Stop! oh stop!" cried Benny. "There's a cart on the line at the crossing!"

Then the flag dropped from his weary hand, and he fell, an exhausted little mass, upon the bank.

When he opened his eyes, he was lying on his own little bed, and his mother was bending over him. She caught him to her arms.

"My boy, my brave boy!"

A gentleman came in.

"So this is the little hero who stopped the train? Poor little chap! he had a run for it. I'll take down his name, for I am a director of the company, and we must remember him."

Mother had got a lift in a neighbour's cart from Crowcombe. At the top of the hill she found, lying asleep in the ditch, the drunken farmer, thrown out of the gig by the runaway horse he had lashed into fury, and who had been the cause, by his sottish folly, of the terrible danger which Benny's pluck had averted.

The railway company did not forget him. After grandfather's death they moved him and his mother from the moorland cottage into the town, and sent Benny to a good school. When he was old enough his early dream was realised, and he was employed on the line.—*Edith E. Cuthell.*

THE AGE FOR CONFIRMATION.

The last number of the *Church Quarterly* has a lengthy and learned article discussing the question as to the right age for Confirmation. The *Review* wisely urges that it is desirable to have some fixed rule and that the earlier the candidates are confirmed, say after their thirteenth year, the better. It is pointed out that "the majority of elementary school children leave between thirteen and fourteen, just before the time when they can be presented for confirmation. The change from school to work is a very great and unsettling one. Breaking ground in a new and older kind of life involves novel experiences and invites strong temptations. In the first taste of freedom from mental discipline and childish restraints, young lads and girls are often for a time less amenable to teaching than at either a younger or an older age. If previous training has not already grounded them well in the full value of sacramental grace, the period immediately following the commencement of work is frequently not the best for beginning to instruct them. Clergy of competence and experience are of opinion that for such persons, the time between fourteen and eighteen is practically the worst possible for preparing them." The writer goes on to details, the difficulties which arise when a girl

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