

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## 'Add a Step.'

[ (E. E. Brown, in 'October St. Nicholas.') ]

'O father! my sword is too short, I know!  
And how can I win the day  
When, hand to hand, I must meet the foe  
And keep him—with this!—at bay?'

'Say not, weak boy, that your sword is too short,

But add a step to its length!'  
Was the Spartan father's stern retort  
As he tested the young lad's strength.

Ah! many a time in the battle of life  
When we murmur, disheartened and sad,  
O'er our poor short swords, we might win in the strife  
Had we courage the step to add!

## Tony's Temptation.

'Tony, Tony,' called Mrs. Murphy, from the adjoining bedroom, 'ye'd better be gittin' up, son, else ye'll be late about yer work.'

Tony turned over in bed with a groan. He thought it hard luck that he should have to get up while the stars still twinkled in the sky, and tramp through the darkness to work, where he tended furnace and built fires.

'Ain't it awful early, ma?'

'Early enough,' replied his mother; 'but by the time ye're up and dressed, and have got all the pans and ashes took up, 'twon't be none too soon, I reckon.'

A brave, manly spirit had little Tony, else how could he have had the courage to enter, all alone, the big black empty room, and with just the flickering light of one small candle, to creep through dark passages and around spooky-looking corners that would cause an older person's heart to quake?

On this particular morning as he bent over the ash-pan in Mrs. Vanderford's parlor, his eye caught the gleam of something bright that, in the reflected light of his candle, glistened and sparkled in the midst of the ashes.

The next moment Tony knew that the gold ring which lay in the palm of his grimy little hand held a diamond of almost priceless value.

'Whose can it be? What are you going to do with it?' whispered a voice in Tony's ear. The voice was that of his guardian angel.

Then another voice whispered: 'It's mine, of course; I found it. After a while I'm going to sell it and buy, oh! so many things—dresses for ma and the children, and heaps and heaps of good things for us all to eat.' This was the tempter's voice.

Again the angel's voice questioned: 'Haden't you better show it to Mrs. Vanderford, and let her tell you what to do?'

And the tempter's voice quickly replied: 'No; if I did, she might say it was hers, and take it away from me.'

So little Tony fought his battle all alone in the dark.

As Mrs. Vanderford was sitting down to breakfast the morning the man brought word that a little boy wished to speak to her.

'Let him come in here,' said Mrs. Vanderford.

In a few moments Tony, ragged and dirty, stood twisting his cap in the doorway.

'Is there anything wrong with the furnace? Is your mother sick again, Tony?' she asked.

'No'm, it's all right. Yes'm, it smoked a little this morning, but I soon put it out,' he answered, awkwardly, in embarrassment.

In a moment his shyness began to wear off. He advanced boldly, ring in hand, saying: 'I found this in the ash-pan this morning, ma'am. I thought as you might know whose it was.'

'It is Mrs. Johnston's ring. It is worth a fortune. I remember, now, she was standing near the grate when she drew her gloves off. Soon afterward she missed the ring. We all looked everywhere for it, and at last she concluded it must have been lost either in her carriage or on the street. Do you know where Mrs. Johnston lives, Tony?'

Tony shook his head, and his heart sank. The evil voice was maliciously whispering: 'I told you so.'

'Her house is No. 703 West Fifth Avenue,' continued Mrs. Vanderford. 'You must take

the ring to her. I know she will be glad to get it back.'

Tony's morning work had left him so dirty that Mrs. Johnston's maid almost refused to take his message to her mistress. She thought that he had come to beg. Mrs. Johnston, however, had overheard the conversation, and hastened out upon the porch, saying: 'A little boy to see me, Mary? What can I do for you this morning?' She, too, thought Tony was a beggar.

'I found this in Mrs. Vanderford's ash-pan. She told me to bring it to you,' and Tony handed her the ring.

The next moment he hardly knew what to think, for that lady screamed so loud that her husband came running out to see what was the matter.

'Our engagement ring, Roland! Oh, how glad I am!'

'And this little man found it and brought it back, did he?' said Mr. Johnston. 'Why didn't you keep it? Don't you know it was worth \$5,000?'

'I wanted to keep it, but I knew it wasn't mine,' Tony replied.

'Maybe you thought the reward was worth more than the ring?'

'I didn't know there was any reward. I knew it was the right thing to do.'

'Didn't know there was a reward, eh? Can you read?'

'Yes, sir; I'm in the fifth grade.'

Then Mr. Johnston drew Tony to him, and showed the advertisement that he had put into that morning's paper, offering \$500 reward for the return of his wife's ring.

Five hundred dollars! Tony could hardly believe his ears; but Mr. Johnston made it seem real by asking if he would like the money paid at once, or if he would rather put it into the bank for safe keeping.

Tony was so excited that he hardly knew what to say. Finally he stammered, 'Please, sir, would that be enough to buy our house, so's ma won't have to pay the rent every month?'

'Where is your house, my boy?'

'On Front Street, sir.'

Then Mr. Johnston rightly guessed that Tony's house was one of the many dilapidated cottages just out of the water's edge on Front Street. He told him that he could buy that house and still have a snug sum left.

How Tony's heart was thumping against his ribs! He could hardly wait for Mr. Johnston to quit talking, he was so anxious to run home and tell the good news to his mother.

And the happiest moment of all this happy day for Tony was when his mother, after having heard the whole story, took him up into her lap, just like she did the baby, and holding him close against her heart, whispered into his ear: 'Tony, I thank God for givin' me such a son. 'Tis a honor to the whole family ye do be.'—'Cumberland Presbyterian.'

## Robert's Bog.

(S. H., in the 'Youth's Companion.')]

'Father, may I have five cents for a lead-pencil?' asked Robert, as he threw his cap back on his head and gathered up his school-books.

'Again?' asked his father, in some surprise. 'I think that is the fourth time this week.'

'Yes, but I lose them. I don't know where they go,' declared Robert, warming to his subject. 'I can't keep a ball, either.'

His father reached slowly down into his pocket and drew out his hand empty. 'I find that is so with my money,' he said, quietly. 'I have very hard work to keep my small change. I haven't a nickel this morning.'

Robert was silent with surprise. No money! 'But, father—' he began.

'You will have to learn to keep track of your belongings. I have decided to keep track of my pennies, and I can't throw them away.'

Robert knew it was useless to argue, and he turned and ran back to his room. They heard him turning over things and hurriedly searching. He was not a boy to whine.

That evening the subject of the pencils was not resumed, but as Robert sat by the fire,

he broke out suddenly, 'Father, I wish that marshy land down there by the tennis-court could be filled in. Sometimes we lose our balls over the net, and it's too wet to get them. Couldn't you have the men fill in the place with gravel or something and sod it over?'

His father laid down his paper and drew up near Robert's side of the fire. 'Gravel or something,' he said, 'costs money, and the land would not yield anything but grass after that. Do you think it is right to throw away anything so valuable?'

'Throw away?' asked Robert.

'Yes, throw away property just as you throw away your pencils and your balls. How would you like to have me show you the fun there is in saving something?'

'I'd like it—if it is fun,' laughed Robert.

'I think it would be. Now I will give you all that marshy place to use as you like. You can plant it with cranberry vines—just as the men are doing down on the big bog. You can do the work yourself, except for a little preparing of the land. All I will charge you for that labor is the lead-pencils you use between now and the time your money comes in from your crop. Every time I give you money for a pencil we will set it down, and at the time you sell your cranberries we will subtract the amount.'

Robert thought a moment. 'When will the crop be ready?'

'Three years from now—the full crop.'

'Whew!' Robert shook his head. 'That means work,' he said, doubtfully.

'Yes, but it means a lot of fun in learning how to value the results of labor. Try it.'

Robert decided to take his father's offer, and as the next day was Saturday, he worked with the men who prepared the strip of land ready for the vines. It was the fall of the year, just the time to begin. He was eager for the next Saturday to come, when he was to begin to set out his vines. These he obtained from his father's land. The vines were set out one foot apart and in squares of one foot. It was hard work, but Robert was not a boy to turn back from a task, and when it was done and the even rows laid out before him he was proud of his work. It was strange how pleasant it was to think about the crop that would come to him, and how easy it was to keep track of his pencils, and how easy it was to go without the taffy or the whistle and buy his own pencils when he had whittled them down to the smallest point.

The next year there were a few cranberries—just a few quarts that he sold to his mother, but which more than paid for any pencils furnished by his father.

He spent some time during the next year keeping the little bog in order, but as he was a whole year older, he did not mind the work.

On the third year the crop in the bogs was better than for all previous years, and Robert watched every cranberry, as it were, with jealous eye. When September came and it was time to gather them, the little bog yielded three barrels of ripe red berries! Robert sold these with his father's crop at twelve dollars a barrel, and from the money thus earned he had to subtract but seventy-five cents for lead-pencils. He had learned three things—to be careful of his belongings, to work for an object patiently, and to consider his father in the spending of money.

## The Way You Lean.

Twenty years ago there were two boys in my Sabbath school class, bright, lively fellows, who interested me very much; only one of them made me sometimes feel anxious, says a writer in 'Young Folks.' I often found him out evenings in company with young rowdies. When I asked him how it happened, he used to say he was only out on an errand; the boys spoke to him, and he could not help speaking, he was sure. Perhaps that was so, still it made me uneasy. I once said to his mother: 'Is not Willie out of nights too much?' 'Willie out nights! Oh, no; Willie does not go out nights.'

The other boy, whose name was Arthur, I never met among the rowdies. His even-