

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

BLACK HANDS.

There was a boy in our town,
Whose eyes and face and hair were brown,
But, O! his hands, I whisper you,
Were just as black as any shoe.
When mamma bade him wash them clean,
He'd frown, and frown, with angry mien,
And then would say, "Now, mamma, dear,
My hands are turning black this year.
It is not dirt, it is not soil—
Why should I wash and toil and toil?"

A REAL HERO.

ARTIE is a boy—a real, live boy—not a sentimental little angel, nor yet a top and ball boy of the story-books. He is a Canadian boy, awake to all that is going on in the world, and having his own word in the questions of the day, as they are freely discussed in his hearing. He has been reading French history lately and has temporarily enthroned Napoleon Bonaparte on the pedestal of his idolatry.

"None of your milk-and-water goodies for me," he was saying the other day. "I wouldn't be a minister that's afraid to fight, for the world; nor a merchant, to do nothing but make money, like my father." (Artie is not particularly careful in the spending of all the money he can get hold of). "No, nor a statesman either, to pore over musty old books, attend committees, and write documents. The copy-book is just as wrong as usual when it says that 'the pen is mightier than the sword;' the sword, or rather the rifle, is the thing for me. I'd like to be a real hero like Napoleon or some of those French Marshals, and conquer cities and empires and make a name to be remembered."

"Artie, let me tell you about a French hero of whom I read to day—a real hero, according to my way of thinking. I had rather have my name written where his is than have it all over the walls of palaces, as the imperial B's were in France before the last revolution?"

"Where is it written?"

"I will leave you to judge when you have heard my story. Vincent de Paul was a French boy, born about 1576 at Pony, in Gascony. His parents were very poor, and the Franciscan friars at Arles taught him to read and write. He studied afterwards at the College of Toulouse. In 1605 he was captured, in company with some other scholars, on a voyage from Marseilles to Narbonne and carried captive to Tunis. He was here sold as a slave and owned by three successive masters, the last of whom proved to be a renegade Christian from Savoy. The beautiful behaviour of Vincent under the blows and suffering to which the slaves of those days were subjected so won upon this man that he renounced his false faith, gave his slave his freedom, and, in company with Vincent, escaped from Tunis, both reaching France in 1607. He soon went to Paris and was first chaplain to the ex-Queen Margaret of Valois, and then tutor and chaplain in the family of the Master of the Galleys at Marseilles.

"In this position he became much interested in the condition of the convicts who were compelled to toil at the galleys, chained together, exposed alike to heat and cold, badly clothed and worse fed. He succeeded in get-

ting himself appointed Almoner-General of the Galleys and was thus enabled to do a great deal for the amelioration of their unfortunate condition. One day he was visited by a woman, who, with streaming eyes, represented to him that her husband was for some trifling crime condemned to the galleys for two years, during which she and her six little ones must starve. She desired him to intercede with the authorities for a pardon, but knowing this was impossible, he offered himself in the poor man's place, saying, 'I have no wife or children depending upon me; I know by experience what the life of a galley-slave is; I can better stand it than he can.' The offer was accepted, and for two years the noble Almoner cheerfully performed the hard labour and endured the sufferings and privations due to the convict for whom he had sacrificed himself. There is no record of how the man shewed his gratitude, but I think Vincent must have conquered his wickedness and won an empire over the hearts of his wife and children better worth winning and having than all the victories of your hero, Napoleon."

"Yes," said Artie, rather as if he was convinced against his inclination. "He certainly was a hero. What became of him afterwards?"

"In 1627 he went back to Paris, and refusing to be made much of at the court and among the great ladies and gentlemen, he devoted himself to visiting hospitals, asylums, etc., and finding that no one ever cared for the poor little orphan babies, established the first Foundling Asylum ever known. You see, Artie, my hero is as real a hero as yours, only you and I look at heroes from a different point of view; you think it heroic to destroy life and cause unhappiness; my heroes save life, relieve misery, and especially give themselves, even as the Greatest of all Heroes did, in self-sacrifice for others. Depend upon it, that man is the truest hero, who most closely resembles Christ, and his name is written upon records which will last after all the history books have perished forever."

TAKING THE CHILDREN.

ONCE a little boy was deeply interested in reading "The Pilgrim's Progress," the characters in that wonderful book being all real living men and women to him. One day he came to his grandmother and said: "Grandma, which of all the people do you like best?" "I like Christian," was the reply, giving the little boy her reasons, "Which do you like best?" Looking up her face with some hesitation, he said slowly: "I like Christiana." "Why, my son?" "Because she took the children with her, grandma."

THE EARLIER THE EASIER.

AN old man one day took a child on his knee and talked to him about Jesus, and told him to seek the Saviour now, and pray to Him and love Him. The child knew that the old man was not himself a Christian and felt surprised; then he looked up into the old man's face and said, "But why don't you seek God?"

The old man was affected by the question, and replied, "Ah, my dear child, I neglected

to do so when I was young, and now my heart is so hard that I fear I shall never be able."

Ah, my little reader, believe Him! "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." It will be more difficult to hear to-morrow; and weeks and months and years hence, how high and strong a barrier will gradually be rising between you and Christ! Will you not resolve, "I will begin now to seek my Saviour?" Listen to the words of wisdom: "They that seek me early shall find me."

CLIMB OR FALL?

WHAT are you going to do, climb or fall? Tom Smith has made up his mind. He went down the street the other night with two ugly things in his mouth—an oath and a piece of tobacco. Tom is lazy and disorderly, out of bed late at night, and in bed late in the morning, loafing about corners and shunning the house of God.

Charlie Smith is Tom's cousin; and he says he will climb. Charlie is studious at school, obedient at home, correct in his habits, loves the Sabbath-school, and daily kneels at the feet of his Master. That boy is bound to climb. He will advance steadily from round to round in the ladder.

THE ONE SAFE WAY.

THE pilot of a United States revenue cutter was asked if he knew all the rocks along the coast where he sailed. He replied: "No; it is only necessary to know where there are no rocks." These words suggest a deep moral and spiritual truth. Sermons, lectures and books abound on the temptations which lie along the life-course of the young to eternity. Over the most dangerous ones are lifted the solemn notes of repeated warning. This is well. And yet, how much more frequently does the Word of God present and enforce, with all the urgency of motive love can suggest, the very truth contained in the pilot's answer—the "King's highway of holiness." Looking unto Jesus with simple faith, the soul is secure; whatever the perils that lurk on every hand, there are no rocks ahead.

PRAYING AND GIVING.

MANY hundred years ago a rich youth in Rome had suffered from a dangerous illness. On recovering his health his heart was filled with gratitude, and he exclaimed, "O, Thou all-sufficient Creator; could man recompense Thee, how willingly would I give Thee all my possessions." Hermes, the herdman, heard this and said to the rich youth, "All good gifts come from above; thither thou canst send nothing. Come, follow me." He took him to a hut, where was nothing but wretchedness and misery. The father lay on a bed of sickness, the mother wept, the children were destitute of clothing, and crying for bread. Hermes said, "See here, an altar for the sacrifice; see here the Lord's representatives." The youth assisted them bountifully; and the poor people called him an angel of God. Hermes smiled and said, "Thus turn always thy grateful countenance first to heaven and then to earth."