

JACK, AND TED, AND TOMMY.

BY SYDNEY DAYRE.

WHAT'S too bad!" said Jack Bird.

"Too everlastin' bad."

"What's too bad?" asked his brother Ted.

"Mr. Brand's new church is—"

"What?" shouted Ted and Tommy, as Jack, to emphasize his bad news, made an impressive pause.

"Give me the paper," said Ted, snatching it.

"Humph, you won't find it half so quick as I can tell you."

"I'll bet I can," said Ted.

"Do tell, Jack," pleaded Tommy.

"What is it, boys? No quarrelling, I hope."

"Not a bit," said Jack, as mother came into the room quietly. "It's only that Mr. Brand's church, his new church, that he's had such a dreadful time getting built—"

"Go on," cried Ted, who had been fumbling over the paper without success.

"Is—burnt to the ground!"

The excitement was fully equal to Jack's expectations.

"I am very, very sorry," said mother.

"Poor Mr. Brand will be discouraged, I am afraid."

"I should say so," said Jack. First, foundations all washed away by a cloud-burst. Next, man that had part of their money ran away. Now—just as they had finished!"

"I wish we could do something to help him," said mother, with a sigh.

"Can't we?" said Ted. But he said it faintly, for he knew pretty well they could not.

"How could we—when we haven't got a cent to give?" asked Jack, in some indignation, not at his brother, but at the fact.

"Some of the boys earn money," said Ted. "Jim Lee helps down at the sawmill and gets a quarter a day. Ike hauls edgings from the mill for folks and gets twenty cents a load, for kindlings."

"They're all bigger'n us," said Jack. "I s'pose we'll have to wait till we grow."

"And by that time p'raps the church'll be built up again," said Ted, dolefully.

"But p'raps not," said Tommy, hopefully.

The young Birds lived far up in the pine woods where they had seen little growing except pine trees, and little doing except the turning of them into lumber. Mr. Brand was a young minister who, when a student at college, had been sent up to preach to the people in the woods. He had made his home with the Birds, and the boys had become very warmly attached to him. He now had a church of his own hundreds of miles away—at least it

had been supposed he had one ready to occupy. He sent the Birds a religious paper, and it was in this that Jack had come across the news of the cruel flames which had swept away the fair new building. Jack had been reading the stories in the youth's department, and the item had been in the next column, which probably was the reason why he had happened on it. Everybody felt depressed over Mr. Brand's misfortune. It was late fall and the family were gathered around the open fire as the Sunday evening settled down. The fire grew lower, and the faces grew soberer and the hearts heavier, thinking of the trouble of the friend held in such loving memory. At length with a sigh, at least the fiftieth one which had been drawn, putting them all together, Jack, with a half muttered remark about "doing something," got up, and bringing a basket from the corner, flung upon the fire in the big stone-bound chimney a number of pitchy pine cones. The sluggish fire soon caught upon them. They crackled and blazed, filling the room with dancing light.

"Mr. Brand used to like that," said Tommy, pointing to the bright blaze.

"Yes, he did," said Jack.

"Said it was awful bright and cheerful," chimed in Ted.

"Say!" exclaimed Jack, with the energy and enthusiasm belonging to a charming new idea,

"I wish we could send him some."

"To cheer him up," said Tommy delightedly.

"And make him feel good," said Jack.

"Can't we, mother?" asked Ted.

Mother sat still looking into the fire, and the boys did not clamor for a quick reply, for they knew that she was thinking. Likewise, that mother's thoughts often led to something, hopeless as the subject might seem. She gazed into the cheery brightness with very loving thoughts of the young fellow who in a few short months had succeeded, through his earnestness of purpose and fervent pursuit of the best and highest things, in planting seeds here in the wilderness which, watered and fostered by the Spirit, would spring up unto everlasting life. It was painful to be obliged to realize along with the craving desire to hold out a helping hand in his need the cruel impossibility of doing it.

"Oh, I s'pose we couldn't," resumed Ted, after what they thought a reasonable time of waiting.

"The idea of sending pine cones so far!" said Jack, impatiently.

"But he did like 'em—lots," persisted Tommy.

"Well," said the mother at length, "I don't believe the freight on a barrel of cones would be much—"

"A whole barrel!" exclaimed Tommy, in ecstasy.