

Our Young Folks.

THE LITTLE ARM-CHAIR.

Nobody sits in the little arm-chair;
It stands in a corner dim;
But a white-haired mother gazing there,
And yearningly thinking of him,
Sees through the dusk of the long ago
The bloom of her boy's sweet face,
As he rocks so merrily to and fro,
With a laugh that cheers the place.

Sometimes he holds a book in his hand,
Sometimes a pencil and slate,
And the lesson is hard to understand,
And the figures hard to mate;
But she sees the nod of his father's head,
So proud of the little son,
And she hears the word so often said,
"No fear for our little one."

They were wonderful days, the dear sweet days,
When a child with sunny hair
Was hers to scold, to kiss, and to praise,
At her knee in the little chair.
She lost him back in the busy years,
When the great world caught the man,
And he strode away past hopes and fears
To his place in the battle's van.

But now and then in a wistful dream,
Like a picture out of date,
She sees a head with a golden gleam
Bent over a pencil and slate,
And she lives again the happy day,
The day of her young life's spring,
When the small arm-chair stood just in the way,
The centre of everything.
—Margaret E. Sangster, in Harper's Bazar.

TOLD IN THE DARK.

Leo was in bed. He had said "Now I lay me," then he had asked his mother to turn down the light.

Leo was a very lion to face all outside foes. He was not so brave when face to face with the little knight of right within him. That was what mother called his conscience—the little knight of right.

Mother knew what it meant when Leo asked to have the light turned out; she sat down on the bed, and took Leo's hand and said in a tender, encouraging way:—
"Tell mother all about it."

Leo lay very still for some minutes, then he burst out in a boy's way right in the middle of the story:—

"Perhaps you'll think 'twasn't so—an' I don't know as I'd believe it myself, only I saw them with my own eyes—I did, mother! an' you'll say yes, won't you, mother? I couldn't help it, really I couldn't—an' she's down in the kitchen!"

Mother smiled. She stroked the little brown fist. She spoke gently.

"What was the strange sight, and who is 'she'?"

"Well, it was this way. We boys were coming home from skating, just dark, an' a cat scatted across the road, an' all the fellows snowballed her—I did, too, mother—an' she tried to squirm through a picket fence an' got caught an' couldn't get through or back, an' the boys yelled—an' that very minute the East Enders fired on us from over the wall, an' we had a regular fight, an' drove em all the way back, just like the minute men that time at Lexington."

"Then it was dark, an' I came home from the corner alone. An' along in the pine woods—this is true, mother, 'tis, I saw it with my own eyes—I saw that kit's face in the dark, in the air—an' lots of other kittens' faces—the dark was full of them, an' all the eyes looked at me, so beggin'-like! I was so sorry—an' a little bit afraid, too—an' I just started an' ran."

"Did you leave the kitten faces behind when you ran home?" asked mother.

"I didn't run home—I-I run back the road where we snowballed the kit; an' there she was, stuck fast in the fence, an' mewin' just awful—an' I got her out an' brought her home, an'an'—she's down in the kitchen now!"

The little brown fingers squirmed around mother's as he went on doubtfully, "An' you will say yes, won't you, mother? I couldn't help it—I really couldn't, mother—an' we've only three other kits, you know—only three, mother!"

Mother lifted the little brown fist and kissed it. "We will take care of her somehow," she said.

Leo was very still for the next minute or two, then he suddenly asked:—

"But the faces, mother, the kittens' faces in the dark—how came they there? Such a many kits' faces—and such eyes!"

Mother kissed Leo again, this time on his red lips, as she replied:

"Perhaps it was the doing of the little knight of right!"

THE HIGHLAND SOLDIER.

Writing from Cairo, a lady relates the following touching incident. She was allowed to visit the military hospital soon after some wounded men had been brought in from a skirmish.

"The three hours we could stay were full of work for heart and hand. One you soldier from a Highland regiment especially excited my interest. He had lost a limb, and could not, the doctor said, live through the night. I stopped at his side to see if there was anything I could do for him. He lay with closed eyes, murmuring, 'Mother, mother.' I dipped my handkerchief in a basin of ice water, and bathed his forehead where the fever flushes burned. Oh, that is good!" he said, opening his eyes. Seeing me bending over him, he caught my hand and kissed it. "Thank you, lady," he said, and smiled; "it minds me o' my mother."

"Can I write to your mother?" I asked.

"No," he said; "the surgeon promised to write to her." But could I, would I sing to him?

"I hesitated a moment, and looked around. The gleam of the sun on the yellow waters of the Nile, as the western rays slanted down, caught my eye, and suggested the river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God. I began to sing in a low voice the hymn, 'Shall we gather at the river?' Eager heads were raised around us to listen more intently, while bass and tenor voices weak and tremulous, came in on the chorus:—

'Yes we'll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river;
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.'

When the song was ended, I looked into the face of the boy—for he was not over twenty—and said, 'Shall you be there?'

"Yes, I'll be there, through what the Lord Jesus has done for me," he answered, with his blue eyes shining, while the light that never was on land or sea irradiated his face.

"The tears gathered in my eyes as I thought of the mother, in her far-off Scottish home, watching and waiting for tidings of her soldier boy who was breathing away his life in an Egyptian hospital; and I sang,—

'In the sweet by-and-by
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.'

"I then stooped and kissed his forehead.

"Do come again, lady; come again," I heard on all sides as we left the barracks. I shall go, but I shall not find my Scottish laddie; for by to-morrow's reveille he will have crossed the river."

A STORY ABOUT VENICE.

Let me tell you a story about the pigeons of Venice. If you were there you could see, at two o'clock every afternoon, flocks and flocks of pigeons alighting on the pavement near the great church of St. Mark's. No one ever thinks of disturbing them; no boy or girl in Venice would dare to throw a stone at them. But the people, young and old, like to go at that hour to see tame, beautiful birds.

What do they come for? To be fed. A great many years ago, in the early days of Venice, the people used to keep what they called movable stores in the great square. They were something like the fruit stands at our corners, only they were

dotted about in the square, and a large umbrella was spread over each. One man had four of these and was quite rich. He was a good, kind-hearted man, and liked to have the pigeons come down from their cotes away up in the high buildings and pick up the crumbs around his stores. The magistrates, seeing him so interested in the birds, allowed him a sum of money to buy food for them, and he was to feed them every day at a certain hour.

Why this was done we do not know, unless it was for the pleasure of having the birds around. For Venice is a strange city, built on a great many little islands; the streets are all water and the people go about in boats. They never ride, and there are many persons there who never saw a horse or even a cow. They have a few dogs, and the government are so kind that they have water carried every morning to fill the vessels all over the city where the dogs may drink. Perhaps it was this same kindness that led them to provide for the pigeons.

After awhile there was a change in the government and the birds were neglected, but they still had a friend. A kind woman who lived near the great church, began to miss the birds. Her name was Signora Polcastro. She made up her mind that if there was no one else to feed them she would. She did this as long as she lived, and when she died it was found that she had left money enough in her will to feed the pigeons always.

So now, strangers who go to Venice can go out in the square any day at two o'clock and see the pigeons fed. They come by hundreds and seem to enjoy their food and company very much.

All my little readers, I am sure, would like to go to see them; and would want to feed them, too.—The Angelus.

THE ROMAN SLAVE.

Blandina was a Roman slave girl; one of a down-trodden race, for whom life held little of love and less of pleasure. What marvel then, when to her was made known the story of Jesus' love, that it filled her heart to overflowing with gratitude. Was it possible, the Incarnate God Himself, loved her? That He had stooped to a slave's death to redeem and bless the slave? Matchless grace! To her heart the name of Christ became exceedingly precious; but her fidelity was to be sorely tried. A fierce persecution of the Christians was then raging in Rome. Blandina was arrested. The delicate girl of sixteen was racked, scourged, and her flesh torn with iron hooks to induce her to deny her Redeemer. In vain. All that torture could wring from her was the repeated declaration: "I am a Christian!" "I am a Christian!" words which seemed to support her wonderfully. When exposed at last to be torn by wild beasts, a calm, sweet smile rested upon her face, and, with the name of Christ upon her lips, the poor slave passed home to the glory land.

Dear young reader, the Bible speaks of all who are not God's children as being slaves to sin. What a dreadful fact! But the Lord Jesus died a slave's death to redeem the slave. Has he redeemed you? Are you one of the redeemed? Is His name precious to you as it was to this poor child, who could rejoice amid the bitterest suffering that she was "counted worthy to suffer shame for His name?" Are you ashamed of Jesus, or have you courage to confess His name, by living a holy life to His honour and glory?—Dayspring.

The Rev. Sidney Phillips, Vicar of Kidderminster: What was to be said of the family life of the people of England today. The lax views of marriage, the increasing luxury and its attendant vices, the constant efforts that are made to explain away the laws of God, the difficulties which are put in the path of those who desire to give definite religious instruction to the young, the increasing neglect of Sunday observance, had placed the home in danger.

Teacher and Scholar.

Sept. 3rd, 1893. } PAUL SHIPWRECKED. { Acts xxvii., 30-44.
GOLDEN TEXT.—God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.—Ps. xlvii. 1.

After Paul's appearance before Agrippa, the time of his departure for Italy was fixed. With certain other prisoners he was placed under the charge of a centurion. Aristarchus and Luke (v. 2) were among his companions. Not being able to sail direct to Italy, they embarked on a vessel, which coasted along the shore of Asia Minor. At Myra, they were transferred to an Egyptian vessel bound for Italy with a cargo of wheat. Their course is minutely traced until they reached the harbour of Fair Havens, on the south side of the island of Crete. As the coast of the island trends here suddenly towards the north, a ship could make no further progress against the northwest winds with which they had been contending. The season was now so late (Oct.) that hope of reaching Italy before winter was given up. But Phenice, a harbor farther west in Crete, was more convenient to winter in. So, when the wind seemed favorable, the attempt was made, against Paul's advice, to reach it. A storm, however, suddenly sprang up and drove the vessel southward. The temporary shelter of the lee side of a little island enabled them to undergird the ship. Twice they had to lighten it, and as the storm kept on, day after day, they despaired of safety. In this emergency Paul cheered them with hope of deliverance. After two weeks drifting they found themselves at night in the neighborhood of land, and anchoring from the stern waited, longing for day.

1. Frustrated attempt of the sailors to leave the ship. Doubtful whether the ship could outride the storm and be brought safely to shore, the sailors selfishly resolved to abandon it, and leave the others on board to their fate. For this purpose they let down the little boat, under pretence of laying out anchors from the foreship. Paul's watchful eye discerned their purpose. Knowing that the soldiers were destitute of the skill needful, if the ship was to be managed, he pointed out to them and the centurion the impossibility of escape unless the crew remained. The soldiers at once set the boat adrift, by cutting the ropes which fastened it to the vessel, and so frustrated the attempt.

2. Renewed encouragement by Paul. During the time the ship was driven about those on board had no inclination to take any regular meals. But safety required them to keep up their strength, for labor and fatigue would yet have to be encountered before they reached shore. Paul, stepping naturally into a leading position, urges on them the need of taking food, and again gives them, in a proverbial form (1 Kings i. 52; Luke xxi. 18), the assurance of entire safety, for which he had a divine pledge. Then, performing the usual office of the head of the Hebrew family, he gave thanks to God, and breaking bread, (not in any sacramental way), probably distributed it among those present, according to the Hebrew custom, and set them the example by beginning to eat. His words and bearing raised their hopes, and with the more cheerful state of mind their appetites returned. The number on board shows that their vessel was of large size. That the ship might draw as little water as possible, when they ran ashore, they again lightened it, casting out the bulk of the cargo.

3. The wreck. The land which they saw when day dawned was unknown to them. It has been identified with what is now called St. Paul's Bay, on the north west of Malta. It was out of the regular line of sea travel, and had no striking features that would make it readily recognizable. The bay is formed by the main shore on the south and west, and by a little island, which comes within a hundred yards of it on the north. The coast, while for the most rocky, had at one point a beach, i.e. a smooth, sandy shore. Here they determined to run the ship ashore. Leaving the anchors in the sea, and loosing the bands by which the masts had been tied, they raised the foresail, to cause it to move shoreward with greatest precision and velocity. The outlet of the channel between the little island and Malta is thought to be meant by the place where two seas met, at which the ship ran aground. The bottom of the bay is of so peculiar a nature that the prow of the ship would strike a bed of mud, graduating into tenacious clay. This was what haled it fast, while the stern, exposed to the force of the waves, began to break up. The soldiers, whose lives were answerable for the safe-keeping of the prisoners, showed themselves as selfish in a way as the sailors had been, and counselled that all should be killed. The centurion, out of regard for Paul, restrained them. Those able to swim were commanded to get first to land; and the others, floating on whatever they could get hold of, all succeeded in making their escape.