



MOSTLY
BOYS

FRANCIS J. FINN, S.J.

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SHORT STORIES

BY

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MOSTLY BOYS.

The Wager of Gerald O'Rourke.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

I.

IT was five minutes after nine on the morning of December 23d, when a small boy, with an expression akin to the pathetic upon his smug features, entered the Second Academic classroom of Marquette College, Milwaukee, and handed his teacher this note:

9:04 A.M.

Gerald O'Rourke, late.

Please admit.

A. MOSHER, S.J.

Mr. Lawton read this communication with a frown. He was impatient of late-comers, as are all earnest teachers. His frown quickly disappeared, however, as a grin at once cheerful and deprecating came upon Gerald's upturned face.

“Don't mind it this time, sir: I was up late

last night practising the Christmas Mass, and mamma couldn't get me up this morning. I've got to stay after class for Father Mosher anyhow."

And then Gerald's face, which had grown gloomy as he recalled his after-class engagement with the reverend prefect of discipline, lighted up with a smile as he caught the teacher's assumed expression of delight at this announcement.

With a cheerfulness that expressed itself even unto levity in his walk, he went to his seat beside Maurice Desmond, and giving that young classmate a stealthy but sharp dig in the ribs, he unstrapped his books and prepared himself for the labor of the day.

"Are you kept in?" whispered Maurice, as he brought his head below the lid of his desk in simulated quest of a penholder.

"Sure!"

Maurice grinned, and was about to duck his head again, when he noticed that Mr. Lawton was taking an exaggerated interest in his movements. Maurice grew very solemn and attentive. Having in a very short time thus regained the confidence of his teacher, he slowly and surreptitiously composed the following note:

DEAR GERALD: I'll bet you one pair of beads that you'll be late for the four-o'clock Christmas Mass. MAURICE DESMOND.

Gerald after the consumption of much time and patience answered:

DEAR MAURICE: I take your bet, and go you one more pair that I call at your house and wake you up at 3:15 Christmas morning.

GERALD O'ROURKE, Esq.

Half an hour elapsed before Maurice had succeeded in penning this delectable answer:

GERALD O'ROURKE, Esq.: You're out of your senses, you old sleepy-head; but I'll take you anyhow. You'll say those two pair of beads Christmas Day, and don't you forget it either.

Yours,

THE HONORABLE MAURICE DESMOND, LL.D.

At this stage of the communications Mr. Lawton broke in:

"Gerald and Maurice, bring me those papers."

And thus ended the correspondence.

II.

There may be heavier sleepers in this world than Gerald O'Rourke, but if so, they are unknown to the present writer. Not that his

sleepiness came upon him at early nightfall—oh, no! He was wont to tease his mother, when nine o'clock, the appointed hour, came, to let him stay up “just a little longer.” Mamma was quite indulgent to her eloquent little darling, and it not unfrequently happened that Gerald wheedled his way to half-past ten of the night. On the following day, of course, Mrs. O'Rourke had a giant's task to bring the youngster out of the land of Nod. Sometimes it was a matter of fifteen or twenty minutes.

When, then, Mrs. O'Rourke, on Christmas Eve, heard from the lips of her sanguine son the account of his wager with Maurice, she smiled.

“You foolish boy, why didn't you content yourself with the first bet? I'm quite sure we shall be able to get you over to the church by four o'clock: but if I want to have you out so as to call Maurice at half-past three, I shall have to get up at midnight; and I can't afford to do that, my dear.”

“You don't have to, mamma,” cried the eager child. “Don't you think I'm able to get up by myself?”

“Decidedly not.”

“Well, I'll fool every one of you. Don't you remember our class picnic last June, when we

all had to be at the college at seven o'clock sharp? And wasn't I up at six? And didn't I wake you, and papa, and Uncle Edward, who got up so mad, and offered to throw his big shoes at me? You just wait, mamma, and see."

"Picnics are a different thing, my dear. You were so in love with the idea of spending a day out in the country and by the shore of Lake Michigan, that you were too excited to sleep soundly. Besides, it was warm and pleasant weather. But think of getting up at three tomorrow in the dark and the cold, and of getting out into the freezing air. Singing at Mass is not precisely a picnic."

"But, mamma, I am going to sing the solo part of the *Adeste Fideles* at the Offertory, and if I were late, our choir-director would have a right to be disgusted—he's taken such pains with me. And then, too, I want to make a good Holy Communion; and—and—I've got a plan to get up at three o'clock sharp."

"What is that, Gerald?" asked his father.

"Why, I'm a-going to have my alarm-clock set to go off at three o'clock sharp, and—"

At this stage of Gerald's plan his father, mother, uncle, and two sisters broke into laughter. The idea that any alarm-clock could pro-

duce the least effect on Gerald, once he was asleep, struck them as being exquisitely ridiculous.

Uncle Edward clothed this idea in words.

“If you were to stack your room from floor to ceiling with alarm-clocks, and if you had the biggest kind of an alarm-clock for a bolster, and if all these alarm-clocks were, I don't say to go off, but to *explode* at three o'clock to-morrow morning, I am willing to bet anything I own that you'd snooze right along till your mother got at you.”

Again the laugh arose: Gerald was in a hopeless minority.

“Huh!” snarled Gerald. “Confound you girls”—you see Gerald chose to shower his wrath upon his sisters, who, to tell the truth, were loudest in their merriment—“Huh! I *will* be up, and,” he added with striking inconsequence, “I can dress six times over while you two are combing, and pinning, and banging your hair.”

Then changing his tone, the orator addressed himself to the grown-up members of his family.

“You needn't think that I'm trusting to that alarm-clock alone. That's only part of the plan.”

“Indeed! Let’s hear the other parts,” chuckled Uncle Edward.

“I—er—I got it from my teacher. You see he knows all about that bet, because he captured the notes about it, and could hardly keep from laughing when he read ’em. Well, he said, ‘Just set your alarm-clock for three, and ask the souls in purgatory to see to it that you hear it go off. If you promise in turn to do something for them, they’ll be pretty sure to take care of you.’ And I’ve done it too—and I’ll be up on time to-morrow as sure as—”

“What were you going to observe?” asked Uncle Edward.

Gerald had been on the point of saying “as sure as shooting,” but there was in the family what he considered a prejudice against boyish slang; and so, at a loss for some less commonplace expression, he paused, unable to conclude his peroration.

“But what was it you promised?” continued Uncle Edward.

“Say, ma, I want to get a piece of bread and butter, please, I’m almost starving,” cried Gerald as he hurried from the room, feeling that he had already said too much. Like many a good, pious, Catholic boy, he was, while over-frank in

general, somewhat reticent in regard to his devotions, and in his joyous little breast was enshrined many a pretty little practice of piety about which even his mother knew nothing.

However, before retiring, he communicated to her that should he win his bet, he was going to give a dollar out of his Christmas money to the poor for the benefit of the suffering souls.

Mrs. O'Rourke kissed him.

“And say, mamma, what are we going to have for dinner to-morrow?”

This was his last question.

But it was not his last thought; for Gerald made it a point on the eve of a Communion day to try to think of nothing, once he was snug in bed, but the Blessed Sacrament, and he actually succeeded in this, though I am bound to say that he seldom lay awake for more than four or five minutes.

On this blessed night he had just put his mind into this pious frame, when there came a sharp knock at his door, followed by the entrance of his father.

“Why, papa! Did I forget to bid you good-night?”

“No, Gerald; but you needn't look so surprised. I've just one word to say to you. I

like your plan very much. You want the souls in purgatory to do you a favor. Now, I'm in trouble, Gerald; and perhaps they may help me too. To-morrow, I want you to pray for me at Holy Communion, and you must try to get the holy souls interested in my case. I'm going to leave ten dollars in your coat pocket to add to your one dollar, which your mother told me about. It's all I can afford at present—perhaps more than I can afford. Don't tell any one what I've said to you: your mother is the only one that knows my trouble."

"Oh, papa, is that why she looked as if she'd been crying? Her eyes were red this evening."

"She did cry at first, Gerald. But she is brave, and so will you be, my boy, if I lose my place."

"What!" cried Gerald, sitting bolt upright in his bed; "is Mr. Bush going to get another business manager?"

"I fear so, Gerald. He told me to-day that great pressure is being brought to bear upon him by a number of capitalists interested in the company to put in another man. He has no complaint against me, but he fears that he will have to give in."

“Why, hasn't he got the say of it himself, papa?”

“Yes; but then he's a weak man in some things, and he's afraid of losing his popularity with the members of a certain secret society to which he belongs. I wish he were braver. As it stands, it is now next to certain that I shall lose my place at the end of this year. So pray, pray hard, my boy, and don't fail to get the holy souls interested too. Good-night.”

And, with a smile and a kiss, Mr. O'Rourke left the room.

Gerald lay awake for full fifteen minutes after this interview, and you may be sure he did not lie idle. Prayer that comes from the heart and idleness live far apart.

III.

“You are out of sorts, Henry,” Mrs. Bush remarked to her husband toward sundown of the same day.

“So I am, Margaret. I don't feel at all well in body, and besides I'm distressed about a business matter. I'm afraid I shall be obliged to get a new business manager.”

“What! discharge Mr. O'Rourke? Why you used to say that he was the best and longest-

sighted business man you ever met, and that he was worth far more than his six thousand a year."

"I say so yet. By rights he should have eight or ten thousand. But instead of thinking of raising his salary, I'm worried night and day, by word and by letter, to replace him with a John Landen. Landen has many wondrous advantages over O'Rourke," added Mr. Bush in bitter sarcasm. "In the first place, Landen is not a Catholic, and in the second, he belongs to at least five secret societies. In one of them he is several degrees above me."

"It was a sad day for you, Henry, when you joined that society."

"No, it wasn't—it brought me business."

"Yes; but it took away your religion."

"Not at all, Margaret. I'm a Catholic, and, what's more, I'll die a Catholic."

"In the meantime, Henry, couldn't you manage to live one?"

For answer, Mr. Bush gave a growl, and took up the evening paper.

"To-morrow, my dear, is Christmas. Won't you please promise to come to Mass with me? The children are all praying so earnestly; they are sure that they are to be heard this time.

It's fifteen years nearly since you entered a church. Come, dear, promise."

There were tears in Mrs. Bush's eyes as she spoke, and a perceptible trembling in her voice. Mr. Bush was moved.

He was now growing gray, and age was telling upon his health. For a moment he pondered the request, and, as he pondered, a sharp pain shot through his head.

"I'm too worried just now, Margaret—some other Christmas. I'll go yet."

"But, Henry, how can you promise yourself another Christmas?"

"Margaret, Margaret!" he cried, rising impatiently from his chair, tossing the evening paper upon a table, and putting his hands to his head, "for God's sake, don't worry me. I am wretched."

The poor, good lady had unwittingly jarred upon her husband's feelings. All that day had the thought of death pursued him; and he had built his heaven upon this earth.

Mr. Bush was a millionaire many times over. When a young man, he had been a practical Catholic. But business and gain had gradually drawn him away from his religious practices, till he had become content with fulfilling his Easter

duty. Then had come the allurements of a secret society. Against this temptation he held out for some time; but, unfortunately for him at this period of trial, there arose an unpleasantness between him and his parish priest. Mr. Bush was in the wrong; yet, in a fit of passion, he joined the secret society, and his place in church knew him no more.

At supper-time that evening his little daughter said:

“Papa, won't you please take me to Mass tomorrow?”

All the children, as Laura spoke, looked earnestly at their father.

“I can't, my little one; I'm not well.”

And Mr. Bush, not without emotion, saw the signs of bitter disappointment upon their young faces.

“There must have been something wrong about that novena of ours,” growled Harry, a classmate of Gerald's.

Mary, the eldest of the three sisters, motioned to him to be quiet.

“Oh, I guess I can talk a little,” pursued the undaunted youth. “At least, papa, you ought to come and hear the singing. I'm in the chorus myself, but I'm nothing extra. Gerald

O'Rourke's the boy. He's got a voice like an angel, only angels don't play tricks. You just ought to hear him; you'd be willing to go out and die. Gerald's one of the nicest boys in Milwaukee—a heap nicer than I am. I like him immensely. Say, papa, I'm going to bring him home with me to-morrow. I'm sure you'd like to talk to him. You haven't seen him now for almost a year. He's nicer than ever."

"Whatever else you do," roared Mr. Bush, bringing down his fist on the table, and scowling fiercely, "don't bring that boy near this house. I don't want to see him."

And to the consternation of all, Mr. Bush hurried from the room. He was very ill and very wretched. Poor millionaire!

The children, some hours later, were sleeping peacefully, when Mr. Bush entered the large room devoted to Laura and Edith and Mary.

They had very long stockings, these little mites, which were carefully pinned to the mantel over the fireplace. Prominent among the bric-à-brac on the mantelpiece stood a statue of the Sacred Heart.

Mr. Bush dropped a shining yellow coin into each stocking, one of which fell to the floor. He picked it up carefully, and, not finding the

pin, caught hold of the statue with the intention of using it as a weight to hold the stocking in place. There was a letter, an open letter, under the statue. Mr. Bush adjusted his glasses and read:

DEAR BABE OF BETHLEHEM:

A merry Christmas to you! It will surely be merry to you, if people love you who do not love you now. It will be very merry to us, if papa comes to Mass with us. Oh, he's such a good papa; we are sure you would like him, if you knew him better. Now please get papa to come to Mass. I have made the Nine First Fridays all for papa, and we're sure that papa will come to Mass, and we're going to give all the money that papa drops in our stockings to a priest to put flowers on the altar. When we get up on Christmas, dear Babe of Bethlehem, we expect that this letter will not be here. That is to be the sign that papa will go to Mass on Christmas day. With much love, dear Babe of Bethlehem, we are,

Your dear little ones,

MARY (I'm ten and I wrote
this letter by myself).

EDITH (she's eight).

LAURA (she's six).

After some moments of irresolution, Mr. Bush put this letter in his pocket, and with swimming

eyes turned to leave the room. He stopped on the threshold, passed his hands through his hair, groaned, and with an expression of extreme misery returned to place the letter where he had found it.

He departed very ill, very unhappy. Tossing restlessly, he got no wink of sleep that night.

Poor millionaire!

IV.

Whir-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

Gerald leaped from his bed and into his knickerbockers before the clock had quite finished with its noisy Christmas greeting. In an incredibly short space of time he had completed his toilet, and was out in the cold biting air of the city. It was very dark and gloomy, and Gerald felt tempted to return to his bed. But he shook off the feeling at once, and turned his attention to what his father had told him the night before.

“I *do* hope that my toes will ache, and that my hands will get chapped, and that my ears will pain me like everything; and I offer it all up for the holy souls, and if any of them get to heaven on account of a cold little boy, I hope they’ll remember to pay it back to his papa.”

Saying which, the merry-faced ascetic, as he skipped along with unmistakable signs of levity, removed his gloves and his ear-muffs, and beyond devoutly wishing that it were colder, paid no attention to the biting blast.

After walking several squares he stopped at a street corner and peered through the darkness at the shadowy outlines of a large house.

“Does Maurice live on Eighteenth or Seventeenth Street? I can't remember. Yes; that's the house, I'm sure.”

And recklessly trampling over the “*lawn*,” so beloved of Milwaukee people, Gerald tripped up the stone steps, put his finger to the electric button and held it there quite tranquilly, while the bell tinkled away as though it would never stop.

It had been tinkling for something over sixty seconds when Gerald heard heavy footsteps upon the staircase within, and in some inexplicable way Gerald caught that in their fall which gave him reason to believe that they were the footsteps of a very angry man, and he took his finger off the electric button.

When the door was thrown open with a bang, Gerald gasped in horror, for there, glaring at him fiercely, full dressed, spectacles on nose, fire in his eye, stood Mr. Bush.

“You little rascal,” roared the victim of insomnia and dyspepsia and an uneasy conscience, as he saw the dim shape of a small boy standing in the doorway, “you little rascal, what do you mean by your infernal noise at this time of the night? Answer me at once—what do you want?”

Gerald gasped, shivered, and was within a little of sinking down upon the threshold in his agony. Finally, in desperation and with a determined effort, he blurted forth:

“Mister! wh-wh-wh-what did you get in your stocking?” *

And then he dashed down the steps in a manner that would have brought instant death to any one who was not a small boy, realizing, as he fled into the darkness, that Mr. Bush had recognized him by his voice, and feeling certain that his father's hopes, frail as they had been, were now completely shattered.

For some moments Mr. Bush stood stock-still. Then clapping his hands together, and taking his overcoat from the rack, he too went out into the darkness.

* These words and the incident connected with them are facts, related without the change of a single circumstance.

V.

The Offertory of the early Christmas Mass had come. The organ played a few soft strains of the *Adeste Fideles*, and Gerald standing in the choir by his friend Maurice, whom he actually *had* awakened before half-past three, trilled forth that sweetest and grandest of hymns. His voice, clear and firm, filled the church with its liquid sweetness; but as he came to the words "*Venite Adoremus*" it trembled, quivered, faltered, and softened so rarely, that gentleness, love, and pathos seemed to have found perfect expression in his wondrous notes, and on the concluding word "*Dominum*" it dissolved in a musical sigh or sob of reverential awe.

Thus it seemed to the listeners; and many an eye filled, and many a heart was exalted in unwonted tenderness. But no one in the church had the least conception of what had brought out this prodigal wealth of pathos and love and awe.

This is the fact of the matter.

As Gerald came to the verse beginning with "*Venite Adoremus*," his eye chanced to wander among the worshippers, and there, almost immediately before him, sat Mr. Bush, his spectacled

eyes bent full upon the soloist. Gerald was at once seized with nervous dread; he could scarcely go on. But he struggled bravely, and thus it came about that his nervousness produced an effect at once so beautiful and so rare that Mr. Bush took out his handkerchief and rubbed his eyes for full five minutes.

Mr. Bush's presence surprised Gerald very much. He knew that the millionaire was not a church-goer. On the other hand Mr. Bush was surprised himself. Acting upon impulse, he had left his house; acting upon impulse—an impulse of grace, you may be sure—he had entered the church. And now, how beautiful it all seemed—the singing, the lights, the solemn ceremonial! There at the altar as celebrant stood Father H., Mr. Bush's former parish priest. How venerable he looked; and as after the Communion this kindly-faced old man turned to say a few words to his congregation, words of peace, of love, of good-will, Mr. Bush took out his handkerchief again.

When Gerald had concluded his thanksgiving, and, accompanied by Maurice, was tripping down the front steps of the church, he saw Mr. Bush advancing towards him.

To Maurice's astonishment, Gerald took one

—two flying leaps, and dashed down the street at full speed.

“What’s the matter with Gerald O’Rourke?” asked Mr. Bush, not a little astonished.

“He’s all ri——, oh, I beg your pardon, sir,” answered Maurice, “he’s *not* all right; I really believe he’s going crazy, sir. He never acted that way in church before. Merry Christmas, sir.”

“Thank you, thank you—same to you. Look here, my boy, would you do me a favor?”

“Certainly, sir.”

“Go to Father H. in the sacristy, and tell him there’s a man in his confessional waiting to see him. Tell him it’s an old friend that he hasn’t seen for over fourteen years, who wants to go to Holy Communion right away.”

“All right, sir;” and Maurice was turning away.

“Hold on; another thing. My name is Bush. Do you know where I live?”

“Of course I do. You live on Eighteenth and I live on Seventeenth and State streets, and our houses look almost like twins, and that’s why Gerald O’Rourke missed my house this morning and went to yours. He told me about it, sir, and he’s nearly scared to

death. I used to think that Gerald didn't know what fear meant."

"Very good; now I begin to understand. Well, go to my house, please, and give my wife this message. Tell her I've been to Mass and am now going to Holy Communion. Tell her also to go up to our little girls' room and to take away the letter that she will find under the statue of the Sacred Heart on the mantelpiece, to read it, and then lock it up in my desk without letting the little darlings—girls, I mean—know anything about it. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Repeat!" said Mr. Bush sententiously.

A minute later, Maurice, having summoned Father H. from the sacristy, was racing along the street as though bound on a message of life and death.

VI.

"O-o-o-o-o-h," screamed Edith, dancing barefoot upon the carpet.

"What? what?" cried Mary.

"It's gone—the letter. The Infant Jesus has read it."

Then Mrs. Bush, her face beaming, and tears of happiness in her eyes, entered and kissed her

little ones; and when they told her of how the letter had been taken away by the little Babe of Bethlehem, she kissed them again, and left the room to conceal her emotion.

Mr. Bush presently entered, and it was hard to believe that this cheerful, happy, radiant man had passed the night without a moment's sleep.

He was still romping with the little ones and listening for the hundredth time to the story of the letter, when there came a ring at the door-bell.

"Say, papa," cried Harry Bush, "Gerald O'Rourke's here and says he wants to see you."

"Bring him here at once."

Gerald entered, pale and nervous. He had come to apologize, to brave—poor little hero—the lion in his den.

But before he could open his mouth, Mr. Bush sprang forward and caught him in his arms.

"It's all right, Gerald. You needn't explain. It was the right door-bell. Tell me the whole story, my boy, and I'll promise you a bit of good news."

"Well, you see, sir, I'm an awful heavy sleeper," began Gerald, very much astonished and delighted, "and still I made a bet that I'd wake Maurice Desmond up for the four-o'clock

Mass. Then I got the souls in purgatory interested in waking me up—and maybe they didn't get me out.

“And then, sir, when I came to your house by mistake, and found myself facing you I felt just dead certain that it was all up with my father. Of course, you can't expect the holy souls to do everything. It's easy enough to rout a small boy out of bed, but it's harder to keep a man in a good position when every one's against him, sir, and—oh, my! I've let it out!”

“What were you good enough to let out, sir?”

“Why, I promised papa to say nothing about it to any one; and here I've gone and blabbed it the first chance I got.”

“Gerald O'Rourke,” said Mr. Bush, “you're a smart boy, but you don't know it all. Now, sir, it was the holy souls sent you ringing at my bell.”

“And the Babe of Bethlehem,” added Edith.

“If you hadn't rung that bell, I should not have gone to church, and if I hadn't gone to church your father would have lost his place. But now tell him this: he shall stay in his position as long as I live, and,” he added in a whisper to his wife, “from the 1st of January next

he shall get the salary he deserves. And, Gerald, I owe the holy souls something too. Tell your father that, if he can make it convenient, I should like to go round with him this afternoon and help him distribute that ten dollars, plus my share."

When Gerald reached the foot of the steps he broke into a run which promised to outdistance his record of the early morning.

And so Gerald was happy, and his father was happy, and his family was happy, and Mr. Bush and *his* family were happy, and many a poor man was happy; and, best of all, I doubt not that many a poor, suffering soul winged its flight that day to heaven, all on account of a harmless little wager of which every one came out winner.

The Pickerel Prince.

IN an ancient boat which had seen the wear and tear of many seasons sat an ancient negro. The negro looked full sixty years of age; the boat at least one hundred. The negro had lost much of the hair which had once covered his simple old head; the boat had lost all of its paint. The negro was commonly known as "Uncle Ben"; the boat as "Annie Laurie."

It was four o'clock in the afternoon of a day in July. The boat was firmly anchored forty yards off a high bank, lying south of Buck Island; and Uncle Ben was devouring a slice of watermelon with some animation, and watching a hand-line thrown from the shore with modified interest.

Uncle Ben had had very good luck on this particular afternoon; just twenty minutes before attacking the watermelon he had landed a fierce pickerel, at least four pounds in weight.

And yet Uncle Ben was not happy. His rugged and seamed face, ordinarily wreathed in smiles, wore a sad expression, and now and then

a deep sigh with the ejaculation "Lawd 'a' mussy on us!" testified that there was "trouble on the old man's mind."

On finishing the modest slice, Uncle Ben, by way of grace, groaned out once more, "Lawd 'a' mussy on us!"

Then stepping to the stern, he placed his pick-erel under the stern-seat, and returning to the prow, threw himself down in the boat, wrapped a flaming red bandanna about his face, and presently gave notice by his musical breathing that he was in the land of dreams.

* * * * *

It was sunset. A slight lurch of the boat disturbed the sleeper. Stretching his arms, yawning, and again ejaculating "Lawd 'a' mussy on us!" Uncle Ben removed the bandanna. Suddenly the sleepy lines on his face vanished as if by magic; the partially closed eyes, still heavy with sleep, opened to their widest, and Uncle Ben jumped to his feet, as though he had been lying upon a bed of hot ashes. He jumped to his feet, I say, but he rested upon them only for a moment, staggered, sank down upon the seat upon the prow, and then stared to such a degree that his eyes threatened to pop out of his head.

Uncle Ben had some reason for all this vast expression of astonishment. Before going to sleep he had placed his pickerel under the stern-seat, and covered it securely. And now—the cover was wide open, and the pickerel was gone.

This of itself would have astonished Uncle Ben; but his eyes just now were gazing upon something more wondrous still. For there in the place which the pickerel should have occupied sat a copper-colored creature decked out in a fashion most extraordinary.

Upon his feet was a pair of handsomely beaded moccasins, upon his head a many-colored cap with a high feather, and covered with trinkets which looked like little bells. A light-red blanket was wrapped around his body. His face was the strangest part of him. Over his copper cheeks ran bright dashes of red and blue, and heavy black lines were painted under his eyes. The position of his body was in keeping with his grotesque appearance. He was so wedged in the place where the pickerel had been that he was bent double, his feet almost touching his breast and his fierce eyes glaring just over his moccasins and under his nodding plume.

“Who is you?” gasped the old negro, catching the boat by the gunwale on either side.

“I’m the pickerel,” came the answer in a low, stern alto voice.

“You is!” ejaculated Uncle Ben.

“Ebenezer, Ebenezer!” moaned the apparition, shaking his arm free of the blanket, and pointing his copper finger straight at the astounded old man.

And then Uncle Ben, falling upon his knees in the prow, made the sign of the cross, clasped his hands, and said in chattering tones:

“Dar now; clar out, you debbil.”

“I am not a devil,” answered the curious creature, in milder, yet equally musical, tones.

“I was once an Indian prince.”

“Was you, sah?”

“Ebenezer, Ebenezer!”

“Dat’s my name, sah.”

“But ‘sah’ is not my name. Call me ‘my highness.’”

“Yes, my highness.”

“No; ‘*your* highness’; I’m an Indian princeling.”

“Yes, you’ highness; is you dead?”

“Dead! now I begin to live. Ebenezer, I want your scalp.”

“ I’m sorry, sah—you’ highness—but I hasn’t got no scalp.”

“ Well, no matter, Ebenezer; you have saved me out of Lake Vesper.”

“ I—I cotched you, didn’t I?”

“ You did, Ebenezer. A wicked medicine-man one hundred years ago changed me into a pickerel because I told a lie.”

“ Is you a hundred years old, you’ highness?”

“ I am fifteen; I was fifteen when I became a pickerel, and I’m fifteen yet.”

“ You is?”

“ I am. The medicine-man decreed that I should remain a pickerel till the wickedest man on earth should catch me. Then I was to return to my original form.”

“ And does you’ highness mean fo’ to say dat I’s de wickides’ man on de face ob de yarth?”

“ It would seem to be the fact, Ebenezer.”

“ I didn’t know dat befo’,” said the negro simply.

At this moment there was a great splash near the high bank, and the negro was about to turn his head.

“ Look not for your life!” exclaimed the ex-pickerel. “ Keep your eyes on me.”

“All right, you’ highness. You’s e runnin’ dis boat. Ef you like it, you’ highness, I’ll just jump off, and let you have dis boat to yousef.”

“No, Ebenezer,” answered the pickerel prince suavely. “The boat is yours, and I am your friend.”

“Thank you, sah,” said Uncle Ben, bowing his head till it touched the seat in the centre of the boat.

There was now a jerk at the hand-line.

“Touch it not!” cried the prince in warning tones. “My enemy is now at your line; he wants you to catch him.”

“Is dat so, sah?”

“Yes; it is the medicine-man. He is a dog-fish.”

“Yes, sah—you’ highness, I mean.”

“In order to make a pickerel out of me he was obliged to become a dog-fish himself.”

“Served him right, you’ highness.”

“Exactly; do you see how your line is jerking—don’t look toward land or you’ll die. The medicine-man is caught; I know his way of pulling at a line. Now, you see, Ebenezer, he wants you to pull him in. Once he got into the same boat with me, he’d make a pickerel of me again. Now this thing of being a pickerel is

rather unpleasant. Pickerels are rude characters; whereas I was brought up in the lap of luxury."

"Yes, you' highness; I undehstand. You was brought up by de lamp of luxury," repeated Uncle Ben, still on his knees, and still wearing the same profound expression of astonishment.

"Now, Ebenezer, we can defeat the medicine-man's plans if you help me."

"Help you? Cose I'll help you;" and Uncle Ben arose from his knees. Although still somewhat frightened, he now began to take an interest in the young and friendly pickerel prince.

"Very good, Ebenezer. Now, to begin with, you can't take in your line without hauling in the medicine-man. Of course it wouldn't do for me to be here when you catch him."

"Lawdie!" exclaimed Uncle Ben, "I dun want to cotch a medicine-man. I'll cut the line loose, and clar out."

"If you dare to cut that line, Ebenezer, you will be haunted by a dog-fish for the rest of your natural life."

"Is dat so, you' highness?"

"It's dead certain. Now here's what you're to do. I'm going back into Lake Vesper to get my tomahawk, my ivory bow, and my quiver of arrows. I'm going to dive right here toward the

shore. Just as soon as I dive you must turn your face toward Buck Island, and count three hundred."

"I can't do dat, you' highness. I only knows how to count up to seventeen."

"Very good; count up to seventeen ten times; then turn round, and haul in your line. But," here the prince of the pickerels shook a finger of warning at the old man, "for your life don't you dare to look around till you've counted seventeen ten times."

"Yes, sah; I'll count seventeen ten times."

"Then haul in your line; and the medicine-man will be the deadest kind of a dog-fish you ever saw pulling at a line."

"I neber saw a dead dog-fish pulling at a line, you' highness."

"Maybe you didn't; it doesn't happen often. Now, as soon as you get your dog-fish, you can pull up anchor and go. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sah, puffeckly."

"Well, good-by."

Here the pickerel prince extricated himself from his strange position, and putting his hands before his head, plunged shoreward into Lake Vesper. On the instant the negro turned his face toward Buck Island and counted with a slowness

and solemnity which evinced how thoroughly he had been impressed with the warning just given him

After counting seventeen ten times over, the negro turned with no little trepidation and grasped his line. He brought it taut, and though he could feel that there was some object at the other end, there was no living resistance.

Uncle Ben heaved a sigh of relief.

“Dat 'ar dog-fish-medicine-man dead sho' nuff. Golly!” he continued, as he slowly pulled in, “but it's awful light.”

He began to fear again, and, being a pious and good old man, said a short prayer.

When he had brought his catch to the side of the boat, he gave another gasp.

There was no fish on his line; nor was there any sign of a hook. Instead of the hook there was a small cigar-box tied very carefully length-wise and cross-wise.

With trembling hands Uncle Ben untied the box and opened it.

Then with a gasp he fell upon his knees, while tears came into his poor old eyes.

In the box, resting on cotton, were three bright silver dollars.

Uncle Ben looked at these three pieces of sil-

ver for some moments; then rising from his knees, while the tears were still moving down his cheeks, he pulled up his anchor, and putting himself at his oars, took one vigorous stroke toward the farther shore.

Then he heard a chorus of shouts and laughs.

“ Uncle Ben! Uncle Ben!” cried a voice from the land he was rowing from.

There was a familiar ring in this call. Uncle Ben turned, and saw standing in full view on the bluff Frank Elmwood, Rob Collins, Willie Winter, and Claude Lightfoot. The last young gentleman was putting on his shoes.

“ Come here, Uncle Ben, we want you.” How the old man’s eyes lighted up with pleasure on seeing his young friends! It had become very lonesome; any human face would be better than solitude with the memory of the pickerel prince haunting it. He turned his boat round at once, and with a few strokes had gained the shore.

“ Law’ sakes!” he shouted, as he sprang from the boat, hugging closely, you may be sure, his cigar-box, “ but I’s seen de mos’ wond’ful sights. I spec’ I’s goin’ to die soon.”

“ You needn’t be frightened, Uncle,” said

Frank kindly. " We've been playing a joke on you. We didn't intend to scare you."

" W-w-w-what!" cried Uncle Ben. " Does yo' mean fo' to say dat I didn' see no pickerel prince?"

" You saw Dan Dockery."

Then the old man sat down on the bank in dumb amazement while the little boys danced and howled with glee.

But when his eyes rested upon the tobacco-box he found words.

" And do you mean fo' to say dat dis tobacco-box isn't a medicine-man?"

" Of course it isn't; a box is a box."

" And is dese heah tree dollars good?"

" As good as any three dollars in the country."

" And is dey fo' me to keep?"

" Certainly, Uncle Ben; you're welcome to them."

Then the old man got up, and every one of the merry youngsters about him grew very grave when they saw that Uncle Ben's face was quivering with emotion.

" God bless you, evy one of youse. Youse de bes' boys dat evah cum dis heah way. It wuz God dat put you up to dat trick. My

liddleles' boy at home was took sick yesday night, an'—an'—dey wasn't anything to eat in de house; an' I kem a-fishin' to git him a supper."

"It wasn't a bad joke after all," said Frank. "It's the best joke we've played yet. Uncle Ben, you just come right over to our camp with us, and we'll give you something for your sick boy; we've oranges and jellies and lots of things."

"Has you a watahmellon?" asked Uncle Ben.

Then the boys, who had come within a little of tears, began to smile.

"We'll get you a watermelon, too, and while we're going we'll tell you about the pickerel prince. Ah, here comes Dockery!"

Dan appeared at this moment, with a face not yet completely free of the hideous paint streaks. Dressed in his ordinary clothes, he carried in his hands the Indian garments which he had just wrung out.

"Halloa, Prince of the Pickerels!" cried Claude.

"How de do, sah," added Uncle Ben, advancing and shaking Dan's hand.

"I hope I didn't scare you," said Dan, grinning pleasantly despite the hideous face.

“ Not ten cents’ wuth; and now I’m rich, sah.”

“ You see, Uncle Ben,” put in Elmwood, “ Dan Dockery had just got the idea of dressing up as an Indian and performing a war dance for our amusement. His mother had sent him those Indian togs. We happened to see you fishing, and we knew that you sometimes went to sleep in your boat. This gave us the idea. We dressed Dan up as an Indian, and as soon as you fell asleep we rowed him over quietly to your boat, and took out your pickerel. Then we put Dan in the pickerel’s place, and told him to tell you a fairy story, while we were to attend to your line. You remember the time you heard the splash near the shore? ”

“ ’Deed I do, sah.”

“ That was a mistake of Claude’s. He couldn’t help kicking when he made a dive for your line in order to tie the cigar-box to it. But Dockery was ready for any mistake like that, and kept you from looking.”

Then Uncle Ben shook hands all around, the happiest negro in the land. He bowed and smiled for full five minutes after the hand-shaking, and when he departed he left behind him

the happiest set of boys that ever attempted a practical joke.

After all, a practical joke, if not cruel or unfeeling, is a good thing. But when it is salved with kindness and charity and love, a practical joke is something that the very angels of God can appreciate.

Uncle Ben's little boy recovered quickly; and Uncle Ben himself with his three dollars, increased a day later by two dollars more, invested so profitably that he has never known hard times since he received as his visitor the "pickerel prince."

The Last Shall be First.

ONE quiet evening, many years ago, three Portuguese youths were walking in the garden of a Jesuit novitiate. They formed an interesting group, for they represented quite fairly the three great varieties of novice-life. The leader of the band, Augustine Vasquez, was nearing the end of his two years' probation. His handsome features were clothed in a serene modesty, and lofty spirituality shone from his eyes. He was one of those persons that a timid stranger would accost without hesitation.

The second novice, Joseph de Motta, had but recently finished his first year of trial. In his deportment he was correct to a fault—a brother wag had said of him that he counted his steps. There was a smile upon his face, little short of being perennial, and apt at any moment to develop into a giggle. And yet there was something austere in his expression, an austerity which would not down. He was earnest and pious, but could not understand why every one

in the world should not see the spiritual side of life exactly as he saw it. That very day he had broken three plates while serving his brethren at dinner, had burst into uncontrollable giggling during spiritual reading, and just at present was highly shocked. In short, he realized the definition of a novice—*animal risibile, scandalizabile et omnia rumpens*, laughter-loving, easily scandalized, and breaker of everything.

And indeed he had some reason for being scandalized; for the third novice was carrying on in a way that would have caused even young Peter Ribadeneira to catch his breath. Victor Pereira had just donned the cassock. He was hardly more than a child—and such a pretty child. His face was lighted up by eyes that danced and flashed in an exuberance of vitality from beneath brows pencilled into a rare delicacy. There was a bloom upon his cheek which came and went and changed place, as though these twin roses were playing at peek-a-boo with each other. What would most strike an observer was his air of innocence, candor, and extreme youthfulness. His words emphasized the same traits.

“ I don't see anything hard about a Jesuit's life,” he was saying. “ Now, for instance,

there are your vows. Three? What are three? I'd as lief take six."

"True," assented Joseph de Motta; "to one who has a vocation and who corresponds with it the vows are a sweet burden."

"Don't they ever allow one to go home?" inquired Victor.

"Not during the time of the novitiate," Augustine made answer.

"Is that so? I don't see why they're so particular. I've been feeling a little homesick; but if you fellows can stand it, I can too."

Here Victor picked up a stone, flung it at a bird on a tree near by, and would have been called to order by Joseph had not Augustine plucked his sleeve.

"I suppose nearly all of us felt a little touch of homesickness at first," said Augustine kindly.

"We must crush such feelings," added De Motta grimly.

"Oh, if you can crush, I suppose I can crush too. I'm not afraid of your life. Anyhow, they won't miss me at home so much. I have four brothers at home. They are good boys. There's a fifth one, but he was different from the rest. He ran away from home years ago. As soon as I'm real pious I'll write him a letter

and convert him—that is, if I find out where he is. When he was my age he was pious like me, and wanted to be a Jesuit, and mamma wouldn't let him. Now she's very sorry, and wishes she had. I guess mamma will miss me now. She let me go all on account of my brother. Maybe she's afraid I'll run away too. You see this cross?" Victor took from his cassock pocket a small silver crucifix beautifully worked. "This belonged to my brother. Mamma says he used to kiss it ever so often, and so when I left to be a Jeusit she gave it to me and told me to be sure to have it about me."

"Who knows, *carissime* Victor, but that your cross may go into a far land," said Augustine gently.

"Then I go too," came the light answer.

"The novice-master," continued Augustine, "asked me to tell you before the end of this recreation that the soldiers are coming to-day."

"Pooh! I don't mind that. I'm not afraid of soldiers. My brother Angelo wanted to be a soldier. I haven't seen him for ever so long. But just wait till I get pious; I'll write Angelo a letter that will convert him. He went wrong when mamma wouldn't let him follow out his

vocation. Ah! didn't she cry when I told her I wanted to come here. Why, the soldiers had been here already, and taken away all the old men—I mean, all the professed Fathers," he added, checking himself when he saw the look of horror that had come upon Joseph's face. "And when I heard that you novices and scholastics got together and put a young Father of the fourth year of theology in as novice-master, and then went on with your peeling of potatoes and sweeping of corridors just the same as if nothing had happened, I just thought it was fine."

And here Victor's honest eyes blazed, and the roses on his cheeks spread into the purple flush of dawn, while he tossed his head proudly.

"But, *carissime*," resumed Augustine, "I fear you don't quite understand. The soldiers are to be here in earnest this evening; they're going to take us away."

The flush of dawn upon Victor's face faded into the pallor of a cloudless twilight.

"You're teasing me."

"Indeed, I am not. On the 20th of September the officer Castro tried to win us over. He told us that in four days the soldiers would be here to conduct us all into exile, unless we con-

sented to throw off our cassocks and return to the world.”

“ Do you think he meant it? ”

“ There’s no doubt about it, my dear young brother.”

“ They’re mean, these soldiers. But I—I’m not afraid.”

And then Victor gave a scream and a little jump as the porter’s bell pealed angrily and a loud, clear voice rang out upon the air:

“ Open—in the king’s name! ”

“ Oh!” almost sobbed Victor, “ it’s the soldiers.”

“ Pray, pray, *carrissime* Victor,” said Augustine. “ The great trial of our lives is at hand. I have a mother too, and I—I love her.”

And the brave Augustine stifled a sob; saintly people have tender hearts.

A moment later the community bell rang out solemnly, while the steady tramp, tramp of marching men, with the clanking of arms, indicated that soldiers were entering the courtyard.

“ That bell means that all should go to the ascetery,” said Joseph.

“ Yes; you go ahead, *carissime* Joseph; I will come presently with *carissimus* Victor. I wish to tell him something first.”

When Joseph had gone some distance, Augustine turned to Victor.

“ My dear little brother,” he said, his eyes soft with tenderness, “ you have just left your mother, and you’re not used to our life. Aren’t you a bit afraid? ”

In answer to which Victor placed his head confidently upon Augustine’s arm and broke into sobs.

“ Well, now, I’ll tell you what to do. You needn’t go up to the ascetery. Stay here. You see that summer-house there? Go in there and stay quietly. If the soldiers come this way you’ll find a small opening below the bench. Crawl through that, and you’re out on the public road.”

With a kindly smile and a soft word the elder novice turned away to meet with equal heart exile, imprisonment, or death; and as he walked bravely on he prayed fervently that the little Victor might yet make a good Jesuit.

Now, no sooner had Augustine disappeared than Victor began to take a new view of the situation. The clank of swords and the grounding of arms again rang in his ears. Ah! how gorgeous they must look, those soldiers. And

besides, how were they going to treat those young Jesuits?

Pulling off his cassock, he hastened from the garden. In the courtyard all was confusion. Soldiers were standing about, talking excitedly, while the rabble of followers from the city looked on open-mouthed. In the crowd no one took notice of the unfrocked novice. Hastening into the house, he ascended the stairs to the ascetery. A squad of soldiers guarded the door, which, however, was open.

The scene within was striking. Standing each one at his desk were the novices, with eyes modestly cast down. Strange to say, but few faces were pale. Many a lip was moving in prayer. Forty novices! That means forty hearts animated with the highest and holiest of purposes; forty hearts burning to give themselves entirely to Christ; forty souls all beautiful with glory, for they are a chaste generation.

In the middle of the ascetery stood an officer with his back turned toward the doorway through which Victor was gazing. Standing directly in front of the novices were a young Father and three scholastics. In the exile of the professed Fathers these brave young men had discharged the offices of the absent superiors.

“ We who have taken our vows in the Company of Jesus,” the novice-master was saying in answer to some interrogation of the officer, “ took them forever. We have no desire to look back. As for the novices, each one may answer for himself.”

Then ensued a scene at once solemn and touching. Victor listened eagerly. The soldiers were so stationed at the door that he could just succeed in seeing the faces of his brother-novices. The officer and the young scholastics were screened from his view. But how he listened! These were the words:

“ Young gentlemen, I crave your attention for a few moments.”

Not an eye was raised; save for the lips that moved in prayer, the line of novices might have been a line of statues.

“ Why don't you look at me? ”

One of the novices—none other than Augustine—walked quietly over to the novice-master, and whispered in his ear.

The Father nodded assent.

“ There is permission for all to look up,” said Augustine.

Forty modest pairs of eyes were raised and fixed with intrepid gaze on the man of arms.

“ His majesty the king,” continued the officer, “ wants all Jesuits to leave his dominions; but he is very anxious that you who are novices should remain. You can become priests, or go home, or do anything except remain Jesuits. Now, which do you choose? If you want to be Jesuits you must leave Portugal, your native land, forever.”

No one spoke; no one moved.

“ Come,” continued the soldier, “ how many of you wish to remain? ”

No one spoke; no one moved.

The silence was intense; the very soldiers at the door held their breath.

The officer wiped his brow. Pity and grief were on his features as he looked upon these young men, many of them, as he knew, the very flower of Portugal's youth.

“ Do you all intend, then, to go into exile? ”

He looked at Augustine; Augustine bowed his head. The officer paused for a moment, then directed the same look of inquiry toward the next. The same sign was repeated. From one to the other he transferred his gaze, till forty heads had bowed.

Suddenly there arose a yell of triumph, shrill and clear. Victor had forgotten himself in his

enthusiasm. But into that yell he had put all his courage, and before the officer could turn our novice had clattered down the stairs for dear life, and found himself in the garden alone and trembling.

Yet frightened as he was, he still had sufficient presence of mind to find his way to the summer-house, where he hid himself beneath a rustic seat, and lay trembling like an aspen. Poor Victor! it must be confessed he was an egregious coward. The poor little fellow had all his life been aware of this failing; but, strange to say, he had gloried in it. Now, however, as he lay there in an agony of terror, he saw this trait in a new light, and he began to despise himself. His past life took on a new aspect; a thousand incidents that had caused him to flush with pride now bore down upon him in an overwhelming cataract of shame.

And indeed, for a boy, his life had been a strange one. The youngest child of the family, he had been treated more like a girl than a boy; and his ambition had been to be looked upon as a girl. Constantly with ladies, he had studied their ways, consciously at times, and often also, by a certain perversion of disposition, unconsciously. His brothers with one exception had

encouraged him in his feminine manners. The one exception was Angelo, his eldest brother, who really and tenderly loved him. But once Angelo had left home, Victor met with little or no real opposition, and devoted himself to his dolls and his dresses and his skipping-rope. His father, it is true, did not approve of his oddities. "Madam," he had once said to the mother, "it's no use educating that boy to be a nun." But beyond this remark, and an expression of dissatisfaction now and then, he had refrained from active interference.

Of course, if our little friend had been a girl, he might have fallen into such ways without serious loss to his character. But being a boy, these things made an exotic of him. He had lain in the lilies and fed on the roses of life. His training was a monstrosity. Think of a boy flushing with pleasure when told that he was a perfect little girl! Victor recognized no higher compliment. And yet the lad had been essentially pious and devout. He had his little shrines, his little prayers, his little practices; and none of them were neglected. But even in his piety there was too much that savored of the hot-house. He knew something of prayer; but he did not know that every prayer to God that

is not strengthened by self-denial rises on a broken wing. However, Victor was not a voluptuary; his life had been pure and uncontaminated, and his mind, save for the foibles of which enough has been said, a storehouse of beautiful aspirations. But his stainlessness was not of sternest stuff; the boy had never known a really strong temptation until—

Ah! it had come at last—the one great temptation of his life, and he had yielded. Coward? That was too mild a word. He had followed Christ only to desert Him. He had been a traitor. The little novice, at this point of his reflections, began to shed the most genuine tears that had ever flowed from his eyes. He was humbled to the very dust. Had all his love for Our Lord come to this? Had all his aspirations ended in betrayal?

“I must pray,” he muttered to himself. He issued forth from his hiding-place and gazed about. A thousand stars looked down upon him as they had looked for centuries upon many a bruised heart. The night was well advanced, for his reflections had consumed several hours. He looked toward the house; it was buried in darkness and silence. Even the breeze, so blithe at sunset, had become hushed.

He was alone with God.

Slowly he walked down the garden-path and ascended the steps. Looking neither to right nor left, for he would have trembled at every shadow, he proceeded to the chapel; and as he entered the sacred precincts his heart gave a great bound of joy. Yes, though all had left, the Master was still there, for the light was still burning before the tabernacle. His majesty the king, be it known to the reader, had graciously consented to allow *his* Master to remain, and had placed the chapel in care of a devout priest who lived hard by.

Victor knelt near the door, and, bowing his head, told his tale of sorrow and weakness and misery to Him who is the best of all consolers. If ever a novice made a perfect act of humility it was this poor weakling. Long was the prayer that he poured forth—a prayer that was none the less fervent for the sobs and sighs that broke from his heavy heart.

But for all his praying Victor could not feel that he was any the braver; and he repeated, again and again, the self-same words: “O dear Lord, I am a coward, and I can’t, I *can’t* be brave.”

Gradually his sighs died away, and, exhausted

by the conflict of emotions, the poor boy fell asleep.

* * * * *

Was this a vision! Was it a dream, or a reality? Victor was standing half-way up a steep, rough hill. He was gazing down upon one who was climbing it, slowly, laboriously. No need to inquire who it was. There was a crown of thorns upon His head, drops of blood stood upon the calm brow, while intense suffering had marked without contorting the sublimely gentle countenance. His feet were bare, and as He dragged His heavy cross up the steep ascent, each footprint left a bloody trace.

Victor fell upon his knees. Then that mild face, ineffably sweet for all the pain and agony and sadness that marked it, was turned upon Victor, and those sweet eyes that shone with a love which cannot be imagined rested in gracious pity upon the kneeling boy. Victor sprang to his feet, and rushing to the burdened Master, took the cross and placed it upon his own shoulders. Ah! such a weight. He staggered, and an intense pain penetrated his whole being. His feet gave way; he fell upon his knees, while that cross bore him down, down, down, as though the weight of all the universe

were crushing him. Then Victor reached forth a hand of agony, and the Master caught it in a gentle clasp; and forthwith the cross felt less heavy. Victor tightened his grasp upon the sacred hand, and while the cross grew lighter each moment, his own forces grew stronger. Presently he was upon his feet and staggering feebly but with determination up the steep ascent. What though his feet bled; what though a crown of thorns formed about his head, and pressed it till the blood came dripping down his face; what though pain possessed his very being—was he not holding the hand of Jesus?

His eyes were growing dim; his heart was beating furiously; his ears were losing their keenness in a whirl of ringing noises; but he held the hand of Jesus. One step more, and the summit would be gained! One step—he took it, and the dear hand was gone! Darkness had set in, and Victor lost consciousness.

When he came to he was clasping the tabernacle. It was dawn, and the birds without were carolling in the ecstatic joy of early morn. Reverently Victor released his hold, moved to a retired corner of the chapel, and prayed with all the fervor of a changed heart.

Ah! happy boy! he had made a long novitiate, for he had *seen Jesus*. The *Spiritual Exercises* which novices spend thirty-one days in making are all directed to their *seeing Christ—videre Christum*. The Saviour in His ineffable love had brought our little Victor by the shortest of ways to the sight of that most blessed of visions.

The sun had not yet risen when the little novice set forth down the street of the town, robed in his cassock, and with his crucifix in his hand. It was not yet too late. He would join his brave brethren in exile, in pain, in poverty, in privation, in death. He had seen Jesus.

A kind lady called to him as he passed her house; she begged him to stay; she told him that many of the soldiers had been drinking all that night, and that were he to come upon some of them he would be murdered. He said a few gentle words of thanks and moved on. He had seen Jesus.

Profane songs and profaner words broke upon his ear as he passed an inn; he took no heed. But a few moments afterward a crowd of soldiers flushed with drink came staggering forth, some singing, some swearing, some shouting out "Down with the Jesuits!"

One of them chanced to see the novice.

“ Look! look! ” he cried.

There was a yell, a roar, a chorus of execrations, and the tramping of hurried feet.

“ Hold on, you brat! ” shouted the foremost as he came within earshot of Victor.

Victor turned and gazed upon them with unquailing eye.

“ Say ‘ Down with the Jesuits! ’ ” continued the same man, catching Victor by the neck.

“ God bless the Jes— ”

Before he could finish his prayer, he was down, and twelve or thirteen men were beating him madly and trampling with spurred boots upon his prostrate form.

It was a horrible sight, those flushed, brutalized faces, so devilish in their savage anger.

“ Look out! ” cried a soldier standing on the outskirts. “ Look out! here comes the Captain! ”

But no attention was paid him, till a man clad in uniform, hatless and out of breath, came dashing in among them, and sent two of them to the earth with either arm. It was the officer who had interrogated the novice-master the night before.

“ You cowards! ” he fumed. “ Go to your

quarters. Why! it's a mere boy. Oh!"—he ground his teeth—"some one shall pay for this!"

Kneeling upon one knee beside the boy, he turned the bleeding body face upward. Then such a groan as broke from his bosom!

"My God! O my God! My little brother! Victor!"

Victor opened his eyes.

"I'm so glad you came back; kiss me, my Angelo."

He closed his eyes again, while Angelo bent down and covered the calm, sweet face with kisses.

"Angelo, this is your crucifix." Victor, amid all the blows, had held it tight to his heart. "Take it, dear Angelo; I have no further need of it."

The officer could not speak.

"Angelo, give my dearest love to mamma."

Angelo bowed assent.

"And, Angelo, listen: tell what I now say to the novice-master:—O my God, I vow poverty, chastity, and obedience in the Society of Jesus."

Then the eyes closed; and they never opened again. He had seen Jesus.

A Young Hypocrite.

“ THIS way, Father,” said Sister Ambrosia, bowing me into one of the wards of St. Vincent’s Hospital.

A glance about the room, and I needed no words or introduction to discover the object of my visit. I had received word that morning that a very small boy with a very large head was seriously sick, and that he had asked most earnestly to see a priest. Now there was only one boy in the ward; and, young and inexperienced as I was, I could single out a boy in a group of men, even without the distinguishing characteristic of a very large head.

He was lying back on his bed, this little lad of eight years, his wan face pretty, gentle, eager, and expressive. There were dark rings about his eyes; and as I drew near he put aside a little red book and coughed. I knew that cough. How sad to hear it from one whose every limb and pulse should be alive with the buoyancy of happy youth!

He reached out a thin, wasted hand to me, and his eyes shone with pleasure and reverence.

His quick movement caused the red book to fall to the floor. I picked it up, and as I replaced it beside his pillow, I observed that it was Father Faber's "Tales of the Angels."

"Ah, my little man," I said, "so you're not too ill to read?"

"No, Father," he answered in a voice that was pitifully weak and hollow. "It's about the angels, Father. I like to read about them; especially now."

"Why now?" I inquired.

"Because, Father, they say that maybe I'm going to die. And, of course, I'm anxious to—to feel at home, if I get a chance to go"—

The little man broke into a cough here, and finished his sentence by pointing a tiny finger toward the sky.

Seating myself beside him, I put him a few questions with a view to finding out his knowledge of the Catechism. I was really astonished at his answers.

"Willie," I said presently, "if you die, do you know who is to be your Judge?"

"Jesus Christ." His voice sank into a reverential whisper.

“ And wouldn't it be nice were you to receive Him, now that you are alive, into your heart—not as your Judge, but as your dearest Friend, as your fondest Lover, as the Author of all grace? ”

Willie sat bolt upright, and his face flushed into the semblance of joyous health.

“ O Father,” he cried, “ do you mean to say that I can make my First Communion? ”

“ I do, Willie.”

“ Me, a little bit of a fellow only eight years old? ”

“ That's just what I mean. If you were well, it would be different. But Our Lord is very, very good, and He loves His little ones more than we can imagine: and when they won't grow up to receive Him, He is glad to come to them beforehand. He can make them very happy; and so, Willie, you must get ready now for the happiest day of your life.”

“ When shall it be, Father? ”

“ Let me see: to-day is Monday. Suppose we say next Friday. It is the first Friday, the day of all the month when the Sacred Heart is most generous.”

The little lad sank back upon his pillow, and his wan face, still touched with the flush, spoke exceeding happiness.

“ Here,” I continued, handing him the badge of the Sacred Heart, “ wear this, my dear boy.”

He took the badge, pressed it tenderly to his lips, and then blushed for his want of reticence. In the matter of piety, American boys are reticent; thereby hangs many a tale, many a sad misunderstanding.

“ Now, Willie,” I continued, “ wear that on your bosom, and ask the Sacred Heart to cure you.”

“ I’d rather not, Father; not just yet, Father. *Please, Father, not just yet.*”

“ Why? Do you wish to die? ”

“ I don’t care for that, Father; but I don’t want to be cured; I want to make my First Communion.”

There was a boy for you! He feared, not entirely without reason, that were he to recover, he would be obliged to wait for several years before receiving his God.

I checked a smile, gave him my blessing, and departed.

For half an hour on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday I visited my eager little friend, and explained to him the great Sacrament of love. He was an apt pupil, and so sweet and reverential was his face, that as I spoke I felt

my own heart burn with love for Him who had won so sweetly the affection of this innocent child.

Once or twice it seemed to me that Willie was growing better. I expressed this opinion to him on Thursday. Willie at once became exceedingly disturbed.

“ Oh, Father, is there any danger of my getting well? ”

“ There is no immediate danger, ” I answered gravely.

Then I heard the little fellow’s confession, and left the room feeling as though I had been walking with God.

On Friday morning I came with the Blessed Sacrament. Willie looked troubled, fearful, as he kneeled beside his bed.

“ Father, I can’t do it. ”

“ Why? ”

“ I—I’m a hypocrite, Father; it’s no use. ”
The little man’s eyes filled with tears.

“ What’s your trouble, Willie? ”

“ Father, everything is wrong. I’m getting well—I know I am. I knew it yesterday. The doctor said I was out of danger; and I—I *couldn’t* tell you. The Sister said I didn’t have to. Oh, it’s too bad! I do wish I was dying. ”

“Willie, listen to me,” I said sternly. “You may possibly be out of danger; but it is not certain. The doctor is not so sure as he makes out to be; I’ve seen him myself. Now say a little prayer. I tell you, in the name of Our Lord, that He wishes to come to you now.”

Willie was obedient. His trouble was gone at once, and a few minutes later the eyes were closed, and the little hands clasped, and the radiant soul in that sweetest commune given to mortal man.

Willie’s apprehensions were just; he *did* recover, and bore the affliction quite cheerfully. Indeed, once he had made his First Communion, he prayed to that end.

To-day Willie is as rosy of cheek and as round of limb as any boy is expected to be. He is now captain of the “Flyaway Club” of St. Joseph’s College.

Whenever I meet him I salute him with, “Hallo! little hypocrite.”

Willie laughs gayly; and the boys, who revere him as a little saint, wonder what I mean.

Our Western Waits.

“ OH, come let us worship! ” sang a little lad at the head of the surpliced choir-boys, as they marched in solemn, stately procession up the deserted centre aisle of St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral. His notes were clear, low, full, and golden.

“ Oh, come let us worship! ” he repeated in a rich alto to the silvery voice of the solo soprano who walked beside him.

“ Oh, come let us worship Christ the Lord! ” chorused forth twenty pure, fresh voices; and the stately pile rang with that sacred melody, which, when uttered by childish trebles, is, perhaps, the nearest approach to the singing of the angels that can charm mortal ear.

Softly the chorus died away, as the procession moved into the vestry, where, presto! these pseudo-angels became very real boys, and doffed their surplices with all the varied and inexhaustible accompaniments that animal spirits so lightly create.

“Hasn't Harry Conway come, sir?” inquired he of the golden alto, appealing to Mr. Gibson, the choir director.

“No, Willie; it's the first time he failed to be on hand.”

“It's too bad,” commented Willie. “We've but three quarters of an hour to have our last rehearsal of those Christmas carols, and without Harry we'll feel lost. What a *gay* voice he has! It's the prettiest soprano I ever heard.”

“Yes,” assented Mr. Gibson warmly; “and his disposition is as charming as his voice. He's an honor to his Church, too. You remember, when I asked him to help us out in our Christmas singing, how he answered modestly that he wouldn't do so because he was a Catholic. His manner was good, and his answer showed character.”

“Well, boys,” continued Willie, “we'll have to get along without Harry. Even as it is, we'll barely have time to run through our carols.”

And in the fulness of the Christmas spirit these animated music-boxes gave themselves to their singing with a zest; and, for the brief time allotted them, charmed the air with the sweet and simple melodies of Noel.

But Harry Conway was not charmed into

appearing; and so when the choristers had resolved themselves into the regulation small boy, with his shout, hop, and a jump, Willie Simms leaped upon his pony and cantered off toward the outskirts of the town.

His acquaintance with Harry Conway, whom he had met but four times, had come about in this way: Willie's father, desirous of reviving ancient Christmas customs, had presented the surpliced choir a number of old English carols, with the understanding that the singers were to have them ready for a parlor concert on the afternoon of Christmas. How he happened upon Harry Conway Willie knew not; but Mr. Simms it was who, on their meeting for their third rehearsal, had introduced Harry to them, a modest, decently clad boy, with a voice such as none of them, accustomed as they were to beautiful sounds, had ever heard. Willie was at once taken with the sunny-faced soprano, and their brief acquaintance had already ripened into a sort of intimacy.

Very shortly Willie drew rein before the house which bore the address Harry had given him. It was a modest structure indeed; and he gazed upon it not without some feeling of dismay.

“ Poor Harry! ” he muttered as he threw the

reins over his pony's neck and leaped to the ground. "I didn't imagine his people were so badly off."

His knock was answered by a little girl, a beautiful child, with signs of subdued grief upon her expressive features.

"Is Harry Conway home?"

"Yes, sir," answered the little miss, her eyes filling as she spoke; "and, oh my! how I wish he wasn't! He started to go to singing practice this afternoon, and just as he got outside our gate he slipped on the sidewalk and broke his arm."

The little girl put her hand over her eyes and choked and gurgled in an unsuccessful attempt to restrain her feelings. A loud, rough voice from within broke upon the awkward pause. These were the words that Willie caught:

"Understand, ma'am, I'm not practising medicine for amusement. It's business. I've a family to support, and I don't know you from Adam; so next time I come I'd like you to settle."

Whereupon there was the banging of a door, and with heavy strides the author of these cruel words clattered down the staircase, and rudely brushing aside the two little ones, hurried away.

“ Can I see him? ” asked Willie, with the hot blood rushing to his cheeks at this his first experience of the trials of poverty.

“ I’ll ask mamma, sir; aren’t you Willie Simms? ”

“ Yes, ” answered Willie.

“ Oh, I’m so glad! Harry’s told me all about you. And he likes you that much ”—the little maiden spread her arms as far apart as they could go.

“ He told me so himself, ” she continued, smiling through her tears. “ My name is Mary, and I’m his sister. Don’t I look like him? He says we’re twins; only, you know, he’s three years older, and so I think he must be joking. Ah! here’s mamma. Mamma, this is Willie Simms, the boy that Harry likes that much ”—and Mary repeated the expressive gesture.

The thin, pale-faced woman who stood before him wore, despite her surroundings, the air of a lady. Grief and poverty had not banished from her mild face an unmistakable touch of refinement.

“ Come in, Willie, ” she said cordially. “ I am indeed glad to meet one who has been so kind to my little boy. He seems to have suffered more from being compelled to disappoint

your good father and yourself than from his broken arm. Come upstairs."

She ushered him into a little room, so scant, yet so tidy in its appointments, where upon his bed of pain lay Harry. While the two lads were exchanging greetings, Mrs. Conway withdrew; and even before she had shut herself without—so quick of growth are boyish intimacies—these two had developed into the warmest of friends. God be thanked for it, that young hearts are so innocent and so warm.

"Willie," said Harry, as the door closed, "did you hear that doctor talking? Ah! I see you did. Well, poor mamma has to stand that kind of thing pretty often now. It's been going on for over three weeks. Would you like to hear the story?"

By way of answer Willie seated himself on the edge of the bed and caught the unbandaged hand in a warm clasp.

"Well, last summer papa went out somewhere in the Rockies to do some business and to collect a big lot of money that a man out there owed him. He was to be back in a month; but we didn't even get a letter. Weeks and weeks went on without a word. Last October mamma ran out of money, and we began to get in debt.

November came, and mamma had to take in sewing—there are three of us children, and I am the oldest—and then, Willie—oh! she's such a good mother—she nearly starved and killed herself to keep us comfortable, and just asked us to keep on praying for papa's return. Do you remember the day that I came to your rehearsal first? ”

“ Yes, indeed, ” answered gentle - hearted Willie, mastering his voice sufficiently to speak.

“ On that morning a letter reached us which had been wrongly directed and had been travelling all over the country. It was dated November 4th, and came from an inn-keeper in a Colorado village, who wrote us that my father had died from effects of exposure, and that he had hardly enough with him to pay his expenses. ”

Willie put his handkerchief to his eyes, not trusting himself to speak; and for a few moments there was silence.

“ That's all the letter told us; it didn't even give any address. As soon as I heard the news I went down town and tried to get work to help poor mamma. Then I heard of your father's plan to get up those Christmas carols, and I know it was very bold, but I went and told him

part of my story, and offered to sing for him if he would give me a little money for my mamma's Christmas. And he was so kind; he made me sing a little, and seemed to be much pleased, and said he'd engage me and give me twenty dollars on Christmas. And, Willie, you've no notion how I've been looking forward to that money. It would give mamma a new start."

He added in a whisper:

"Willie, she's pawned nearly all her own little articles to keep me and my two sisters in everything we want. She doesn't think I know it, but I do. And now everything is wrong. I'm afraid I won't be able to sing to-morrow; and I'm so sorry. I won't take a cent, Willie, if I can't sing."

"Then you'll sing," said Willie with decision. "We'll wrap you up, and send our closed carriage after you; and you'll not catch a bit of cold, and—and—say; you wouldn't object to an Episcopalian boy's praying for you, would you?"

"Object!" cried Harry, opening his blue eyes to their widest. "You couldn't please me better."

"Well, I'll pray; and you'll sing to-morrow. Now good-by, Harry; I've got an idea."

Willie, as he spoke, was gazing out of the window; the snow was falling in large, heavy flakes, and the ground was already mantled in white.

He dashed home at a mad gallop, his little brain awhirl with a novel scheme.

“Mamma,” he burst out, as he joined the family at dinner, “I’ve an *awful* favor to ask of you.”

Mamma smiled.

“Will you loan me our big sleigh? I want to give our singers a ride; it’s the first snow this winter, and—mamma, I’ve got an idea.”

What mother is not pleased at her darling’s having an idea? That assertion turned the doubtful scales in Willie’s favor; and an hour later the bells jingled merrily as he drove forth in state along the principal residence street, pausing at various houses to gather in his glee-singers.

Presently the sleigh had become a crowded mass of mirth-bubbling juvenility. There literally wasn’t room enough for one more when Charlie Edwards, the twentieth of the midgets, squeezed himself in.

“Now, boys,” began Willie, using his golden voice to some purpose, so as to be heard above

the bustle inevitable to the massing together of a score of small boys, "listen one minute."

All saw that Willie had something of importance to communicate; besides, the sleigh was his, so they listened.

Willie narrated briefly the story of Harry Conway; he spoke in simple boy language, but the effect was better than that of many a glowing oration.

"What'll we do for Harry?" queried the silver-toned soprano.

"Do? Why, we'll become Christmas waits," answered Willie. "We'll go round, and give our friends all the music we know, and then we'll pass round the hat."

"Hurrah!" piped the trebles.

"Now, boys, where'll we go first?"

"Mr. Gibson's! Mr. Gibson's!" came the cry pitched away up in the high leger-lines. Mr. Gibson was a great favorite with the little ones; wherefore it is unnecessary to spend words in praise of that kind, good man.

"All right. Get up!" and Willie cracked his whip. "Now, boys, let's tune up."

"How's our sleighing song to start on?" asked silver-voice.

"Just the thing."

Brightly their voices broke upon the air; and as they dashed on thus gayly, leaving in their wake a following of sweet sounds, men and women, smiling and waving their hands, came hurrying out of doors, and in the pretty ways which fall upon people instinctively at Christmas-tide, sent the choristers off in an added exhilaration of youthful spirits.

Scarcely was their song ended, when Willie brought the horses to a pause before the residence of Mr. Gibson.

“ Now, boys, gently,” whispered Willie. “ We must take him by surprise. We’ll steal up the walk, and get under the window. Then we’ll give him, ‘ God rest you, merry gentlemen.’ ”

Lightly these “ mamma’s darlings ” tiptoed their way to the spot beneath the well-known window; and as Willie passed around their parts, they seemed to hold their very breaths, while their eyes blazed with excitement, and their features were screwed into that most comical expression yet discovered on boy faces—mysterious solemnity. Willie struck his tuning-fork, put it to his ear, then, humming for a moment, gave each voice its proper note. Clear and low and sweet rose the first strains, clearer,

louder, sweeter swelled the harmony, while each vocalist fixed his eyes upon the familiar window above, and carolled away not unlike a little bird in full-flown rapture of song.

“ In Bethlehem in Jewry,” continued the warblers, as no smiling face at the window rewarded their first stanza:

“ This Blessed Babe was born
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn—”

At the word “ morn ” the window flew up, the loved face beamed down upon them, and thus encouraged the waits burst into full voice with—

“ The which His Mother Mary
Did nothing take in scorn:
O tidings of comfort and joy!”

“ Hats off!” said Willie. Every hat was doffed. “ Ready—charge!”

Without further ado the boys flew up the steps, ascended the staircase, and crowded into Mr. Gibson’s room.

“ Present hats!” continued the leader.

At the word twenty smiling lads hemmed in the puzzled, delighted old gentleman, each trying to get his hat into the most prominent place.

“ Now,” continued Willie, “ before you put anything in, listen to our story.”

And Willie repeated Harry Conway's tale.

The old gentleman was touched, and acted as old gentlemen do when they *are* touched: he blew his nose, and made pretence of having something in his eye.

“ I'm proud of every one of you,” he said warmly; “ and I'm glad you came to me first—flattered, too. Hold your hats higher.”

Into each he threw a silver quarter till he came to Willie's, where he contributed a dollar gold coin.

“ The quarters are for the singing,” he said, “ and the gold is for Harry Conway. Now, no thanks—sh-h—I've got something to say. Don't—now mind this—don't tell Harry's story to everybody. They are poor at his house and in want; but they are sensitive, too. There is such a thing as killing by kindness, when the kindness is indelicate. Now, I propose this to you. With the four or five dollars I've given you, suppose you buy a lot of nice things for Harry and his sisters, as a Christmas gift. As to what other money you may gather in, that you might offer to Harry as a loan, which he can pay off himself by doing some concert-singing for us now and then.”

There was a musical buzz of satisfaction.

“Thank you very much, Mr. Gibson,” said Willie; “you’re so thoughtful! I’d have surely made a mess of it if it hadn’t been for you.”

“Now, my little friends, I’ll give you another hint. In twenty minutes the way-train will be in from Chicago, and all your people who do business in the city and a great many mammas who have gone shopping will return on it; they come home early, as it’s Christmas eve. Suppose you get yourselves in position just around the corner on Adams street, near the station. I’ll go with you myself. You do the singing; I’ll act as manager.”

“Thank you, sir!” — “O Mr. Gibson!” — these and other expressions of thanks might have gone on indefinitely had not Willie ordered all out. Mr. Gibson was presently with them in coat and muffler, and in a trice the impossible was done — that is, all *did* squeeze into the sleigh, packed together like so many sardines, and jingled along merrily to the tune of their sleighing chorus.

As the depot was at a considerable distance from Mr. Gibson’s house, the enthusiastic youngsters enlivened the ride with the songs they had intended for him from the start. From the

mournful calm of the "Holly and the Ivy" they went on to,

"Listen, Lordings, unto me, a tale I will you tell."

Of this quaint carol they sang stanza after stanza till they ceased with the beautiful quatrain, the truth of which they so little understood:

"Onward, then, the angels sped, the shepherds onward went;

God was in His manger bed, in worship low they bent:

In the morning see ye mind, my masters one and all,

At the Altar Him to find, who lay within the stall."

"Now," said Mr. Gibson, as they came within sight of the depot, "you've but three minutes left. I'll go meet the train, and gather your friends."

"Look, look!" cried Willie, as, music in hand, all stood watching the train steaming into the depot; "what a crowd!"

"Oh!" exclaimed several, dismayed at the wave of people rolling toward them.

"It's too late to back out," remarked silver-voice; "but let's take something we know well."

"Noel, then," punned Willie.

"Noel's the prettiest, too," added a third.

As the crowd drew nearer and resolved itself

into smiling papas, mammas, uncles, sisters, and friends, with here and there a strange though not unkindly face, they plucked up heart of grace, and into the sweetness of the words throwing the sweetness of their voices, and that indescribable gift of the child-soul, that dear gift of God's, which the mother, gazing into the eyes of her little one, catches in its fulness, they poured forth the glad song of Noel.

Cheered on by kindly words and loving glances, the little fellows went from melody to melody till the place was filled with the spirit of olden time Christmas, till mothers wiped their eyes, till fathers opened big packages, and threw into Willie's sleigh all manner of pretty gifts.

* * * * *

When Willie and silver-voice, two hours later, drew up at Mrs. Conway's, they rivalled the postman himself in the matter of packages, as they toiled up the steps. The postman remarked this as he followed them to the door and handed Mrs. Conway a letter.

How Willie contrived to present his gifts in so delicate a manner as to bring tears of joy to Mrs. Conway's eyes is beyond my power of reproduction. But I suspect that he had been coached by kind Mr. Gibson.

Willie and silver-voice were soon seated beside Harry, and were prattling away in all the glow of warm feelings, when Mrs. Conway entered the room with the letter.

“ Harry, more good news! I have received an account of your papa’s death. He died, happily, prepared, and his last words were messages of love to you and me.”

“ Thank God, he died prepared!” said Harry.

“ He had appointed a lawyer to take charge of his business just before he took sick; the lawyer didn’t know your father had died till a week ago. He contrived to get all the details of his last moments, and now sends them to me. Besides, he sends me the money your father went out to collect. So now we are safe, my dear. We have enough and to spare.”

“ Just think,” exclaimed Willie, “ I’ve brought more than twenty dollars to lend Harry; and now I might as well throw it away!”

“ If you don’t know what to do with it, Willie,” suggested Mrs. Conway, “ you might help on some of the very poor people in the village.”

On Christmas, accordingly, the young choristers made the rounds again; but this time they repaired to the houses of the lowly. Over and over they sang their carols, and left each humble

home richer, happier for their singing and their gifts to the little ones.

Indeed, it was a happy day. But to Willie the Christmas that followed was far happier.

For during the 365 days that lay between cordial relations sprang up between the Simms and Conway families; and when it came out in a conversation one day that Mrs. Conway and Mrs. Simms were New Englanders, and when both began raking up old records, you can guess how it all ended. They were fifth cousins or something. It's always that way out West. Let two New Englanders get to comparing notes, and in five minutes they'll establish an impediment to their intermarriage which no casuistry may distinguish away.

Christmas, when it came again, was, as I said, particularly joyful to Willie, not because they all made the musical rounds again, and brought down the earnest blessings of God's poor upon themselves. That was joyful indeed; these little lads were still closely united, though Willie had become a fervent Catholic. Their union lasts to this day, and it is three years since Willie's conversion. Willie and Harry love these small Episcopalians, and knowing that it is possible for outsiders to belong to the *soul* of the true

Church, earnestly hold that all their little friends are Catholics too.

But that first Christmas after his conversion! Then came the happiest moment of his life, when, standing beside Harry, his fellow-singer in the Catholic choir, in his golden voice, celestial for the fervor that informed it, he sang *Venite Adoremus*, while his loved father and mother advanced to the altar railing to receive for the first time Him, sweet Babe of Bethlehem, who had descended from the skies and become our God Incarnate.

The Legend on the Locket.

I WAS in my first sleep when the sound of the door-bell awakened me, whereupon I sprang from my bed, and, after a few hurried preparations, hastened to throw open the door.

It was a bitter cold night in January, and without the moon threw its pale light over the wan and spectral snow-covered landscape. The sharp gust that swept into the hall as I opened the door made me pity the delicate-looking child who stood at the threshold.

Her hair gleamed with a strange and rare effect in the moonlight, long golden hair that fell in graceful ripples about her shoulders. She was lightly dressed, this little child, as she stood gazing straight and frankly into my eyes with an expression at once so beautiful and calm and earnest that I shall never forget it.

Her face was very pale, her complexion of the fairest. The radiancy about her hair seemed to glow in some weird yet indescribable fashion upon her every feature.

These details I had not fairly taken in when she addressed me:

“ Father, can you come with me at once? My mother is dying, and she is in trouble.”

“ Come inside, my little girl,” I said, “ and warm yourself. You must be half frozen.”

“ Indeed, Father, I am not in the least cold.” I had thrown on my coat and hat as she made answer.

“ Your mother’s name, my child? ”

“ Catharine Morgan, Father; she’s a widow, and has lived like a saint. And now that she’s dying, she is in awful trouble. She was taken sick about a few hours ago.”

“ Where does she live? ”

“ Two miles from here, Father, on the border of the Great Swamp; she is a stranger in these parts, and alone. I know the way perfectly; you need not be afraid of getting lost.”

A few minutes later we were tramping through the snow, or rather I was tramping; for the child beside me moved with so light and tender a step, that had there been flowers instead of snow-flakes beneath our feet I do not think a single petal would have been crushed under the airy fall of her fairy feet.

Her hand was in mine with the confiding clasp

of childhood. Her face, for all the trouble that was at home, wore a gravely serene air, such as is seldom seen in years of sprightly, youthful innocence.

How beautiful she looked! more like a creature fresh from the perfect handiwork of God than one who walked in the valley of sin, and sorrow, and trouble, and death.

Upon her bosom I observed a golden locket fashioned in the shape of a heart.

She noticed my glance, and with a quick movement of her fingers released the locket and handed it to me.

“It’s a heart,” I said.

“Read what’s on it, Father.”

“I can’t, my little friend; my eyes are very good, but are not equal to making out reading on gold lockets by moonlight.”

“Just let me hold it for you, Father—now look.”

How this mite contrived, I cannot say; but certain it is, that at once, as she held the locket at a certain angle, there stood out clearly, embossed upon its surface, the legend—

“Cease! the Heart of Jesus is with me.”

“Mamma placed that upon my bosom one year ago, when I was very sick, Father.” And

kissing the locket, the child restored it to its place.

We went on for a time in silence. I carried the Blessed Sacrament with me; and, young as she was, the girl seemed to appreciate the fact. Whenever I glanced at her, I observed her lips moving as in prayer, and her eyes seemed, in very truth, fixed upon the place where rested in His sacramental veil the Master of Life and of Death.

Suddenly the girl's hand touched my sleeve—oh, so gently!

“This is the place, Father,” she said in soft tones that thrilled me as they broke upon the stillness; and she pointed to a little hut standing back in the dim shadows of three pine-trees.

I pushed open the door, which hung loosely upon its hinges, and turned to wait her entrance. She was gone. Somewhat startled, I was peering out into the pallid night, when a groan called me to the bedside of the dying woman.

A glance told me there was no time to lose. The woman lying in that room had hardly reached middle life, but the hand of Death had touched her brow, upon which stood the drops of sweat, and in her face I read a great trouble.

I was at her side in an instant; and, God be thanked for it, soon calmed and quieted the poor creature. She made her confession, and in sentiments of faith and love such as I have rarely seen received the Last Sacraments of the Church.

Standing beside her, I suggested those little prayers and devices so sweet and consoling at the dread hour. I noticed as the time passed on that her eyes frequently turned toward a little box at the farther end of the room.

“ Shall I bring you that box? ” I asked.

She nodded assent.

On placing it beside her, she opened it with trembling hands and took out the dress of a child.

“ Your little daughter's dress? ” I said.

She whispered, and there was love in her tones: “ My darling Edith's.”

“ I know her,” I continued. “ She brought me here, you know.”

I stopped short and caught my breath. The woman half rose in her bed; she looked at me in wonder that cannot be expressed. I, no less amazed, was staring at a golden, heart-shaped locket fastened to the bosom of the child's dress which the woman was holding in her hands.

“ Madam,” I cried, “ in the name of God, tell

me, where is your daughter? Whose is that locket?"

"The locket is Edith's. I placed it here on the bosom of her dress when my little girl lay dying a year ago. The last thing my darling did was to hold this locket to her lips, and say:

'Cease! the Heart of Jesus is with me.'

She died a year ago."

Then the mother's face grew very sweet and very radiant.

Still holding the locket in her hands, she fixed her eyes straight before her.

"Edith, my dear Edith, we are at last to be united in the Sacred Heart. I see you, my darling: *'Cease! the Heart of Jesus is with me.'*"

Her voice faded with the last syllable into silence.

Edith and she were again united.

Because He Loved Much.

MR. MURDOCK happened to be in the sacristy of the students' chapel one morning, early in October, when his attention was aroused by the muffled fall of stealthy footsteps in the chapel itself.

The footsteps were light and springy; consequently, they were the footsteps of youth. But there was no haste, no clatter, no spontaneity in their sound; consequently, argued Mr. Murdock, they were to be regarded with suspicion. Small boys, when they make a morning visit to the Blessed Sacrament, enter quickly and with a firm tread. This boy, if sounds go for anything, was *sneaking* in. Mr. Murdock was a prefect; and the instincts of a prefect were aroused.

As it happened, the sacristy door, opening into the sanctuary, stood ajar; yet so slightly that a person within could see the length of the chapel without being himself seen. Glancing

through this opening, Mr. Murdock saw a very small boy bearing in both his hands a very large bouquet, and advancing gingerly straight up the middle aisle.

To make matters more mysterious, the youth's face was effectually concealed by the flowers; while his knickerbockers were not sufficiently out of the common to give any clue to his identity.

Meantime, like an apparition, the seemingly headless youth glided onward till he passed the sanctuary railing and reached the foot of the altar. There he paused, and lowering the flowers, took a good view of the chapel. If he were about to perpetrate some terrible crime he could not have looked guiltier. Mr. Murdock gave a gasp as the boy's face became revealed to him. He gave another as the youngster, under the impression that the coast was clear, ascended the steps and placed the bouquet directly upon the altar stone. To place flowers there was bad rubrics, but it was not this that made Mr. Murdock stare and gasp.

Freed of his flowers, the recent apparition now went through a performance which, while showing further ignorance of rubrics, evinced also that he was a skilled and observant acolyte.

Spreading his hands upon the altar, he stooped, kissed it, and with his hands still in the same position genuflected—a priestly mode of genuflection, it is well to observe, not allowed even to deacons of the Catholic Church.

“ Is the boy going to turn round next, and say ‘ *Dominus vobiscum?* ’ ” muttered the astonished teacher.

And indeed it looked as though that were to be the youth’s next proceeding; for he actually did turn around. However, it was merely to take another full-length view of the chapel. Satisfied with this second inspection, he hurried down the altar steps, and clattered out of the chapel, leaving behind him one of the most astonished teachers that ever taught the Second Academic.

No wonder Mr. Murdock was astonished. The whole proceeding had been unusual. But furthermore, and above all, the youth who had thus acted was John Harding, the laziest, the idlest, the most hopelessly incorrigible boy of his class.

Mr. Murdock went away in deep thought. When themes were collected in the morning, John Harding’s was the only one wanting. When compositions were collected in the after-

noon, John Harding's was not among the number.

"What's the matter, Johnnie?" asked Mr. Murdock.

"Nothing, sir; I guess I'll have to go jugging; that's all."

"Oh, of course; you go to jug this afternoon for the whole hour. It's shameful; you're worse now than you were the first week."

"That's so, sir," answered John with a grin. "But I'm willing to take my medicine." And John grinned again.

This grin would have kindled anger in many a young teacher. It seemed to say, "I don't care; and what are *you* going to do about it?" But Mr. Murdock had learned that certain boys assume a defiant grin when they are glad, angry, sorry, pouting—in fact, when they are in any mood where facial expression suits their purpose better than words. So when John grinned in this aggravating style, the teacher did not burst into a rage, but smiled in return.

"I wonder whether he wants to defy me," was his inward comment. "I can't make out his smile yet. Well, patience."

John Harding did not even flounder through his lessons that day. He was almost dumb.

“ Don't know, sir,” was the only answer he volunteered to Mr. Murdock's attempt at extracting information from him.

When the bell rang for dismissal of studies, a delegation of the Second Academic waited on Mr. Murdock.

“ Mr. Murdock,” said their leader, “ we're going to play the First Academic boys a game of base-ball this afternoon.”

“ Well, I'm sorry for you. You're going to be beaten.”

“ We're afraid so too, sir. You see, Johnnie Harding is our catcher. There's not another boy below Poetry Class that can hold Jack Robinson's curves.”

“ Oh, pshaw! ” remonstrated long, slim Jack Robinson, blushing till his face and hair came within a little of matching colors. Jack was modest, and quiet, and studious, and brave, and red-headed.

“ Now, sir,” continued the speaker, “ couldn't you please let Johnnie off? ”

“ Yes, sir; please do,” cried the chorus, led by Jack.

“ I'm sorry, my boys; but I don't see my way to it. If Johnnie could give me an excuse—”

“ I haven’t got any excuse, sir; and I don’t deserve to be let off,” broke in John.

The boys were so amazed that they hurried from the room.

Nothing like this had ever happened in the history of John Harding. It was that youth’s habit to attempt begging off jug five days out of the five class days of each week. If begging failed, Johnnie would sulk, would growl, would threaten to “ leave this old jail-school for good,” in short, would go on protesting and begging and promising so long as his professor was pleased to listen.

Mr. Murdock, alone with John, gazed at him in surprise. Suddenly the incident of the morning returned in all its vividness.

“ Johnnie, I saw you go into the chapel this morning.”

Johnnie turned pale.

“ You did, sir? ”

“ I did.”

“ With that flower collection? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You—you didn’t tell any one you saw me, did you? ”

“ Not a soul, Johnnie.”

“ And you please won’t, sir? ”

“Certainly not, if you wish it. Where did you get those flowers?”

Johnnie paused a moment; then, looking his teacher straight in the eye, said:

“I hooked 'em, sir.”

“What?”

“Oh, it wasn't so bad; they were my sister's. One of those dudes that comes to see her gave them to her, and I knew she wouldn't care much. Anyhow, she took one of my ties last week. If I've got anything she wants, she just takes it. She's a graduate from a convent school, sir; I intend to tell her to-night when I get home, and if she howls, I don't care, anyhow.”

“But what put it into your head to take those flowers?”

“It's this way, sir. You know I've been doing bad in class ever since the beginning of the year. I've been acting through pure cussedness—that is, sir, I mean I've been obstinate. I wanted to go to boarding-school, and mamma wouldn't hear of it. So I made up my mind not to study, out of spite. It's pretty easy to keep a resolution like that, sir.”

Again Johnnie grinned.

“Is it really easy?” asked Mr. Murdock.

“ Well, I thought it was till I began to prepare for our monthly confession last Saturday night. Then it came upon me all of a sudden that I wasn't doing my duty, and that if I didn't pull up short I'd go wrong.”

“ And yet though to-day is Monday, and you went to confession last Saturday, you did not study at all for to-day? ”

“ Yes, sir; it's just awful. I went to confession Saturday, and came out with my mind made up to study if I had to break a leg. I went to Communion Sunday, and I tell you, sir, I felt as if I'd made a good one. Sunday night I got out my books to study, when two or three of the fellows came in. Well, the next thing I got fooling with them, and we had an awful good time. It was great, sir; we had a regular circus performance, and when we got through I was so tired that I couldn't see. I went to bed intending to get up at six this morning to study, and I asked mamma to call me. Well, she called me all right, but I was so lazy I went to sleep again, and didn't get up till breakfast; but, wheugh! didn't I feel mean. I had promised Our Lord at Communion that I was going to study for Him and had broken my word. I felt like doing something. I saw that bouquet in

Eleanor's room, and just grabbed it and sneaked off. And I made up my mind, sir, that I wouldn't make any excuse to you or beg off. I was awfully ashamed."

Mr. Murdock paused for a moment.

"Johnnie, you broke your word to Our Lord; but you apologized. Don't you think He has let you off?"

"Yes, sir, I do," was the unhesitating answer.

"Well, I can do no better than imitate Him. I'll let you off too."

"But, Mr. Murdock, you know after a person has been forgiven he may still need a little temporal pain—like the souls in purgatory."

"Not if a person loves much," answered the older theologian. "Hurry off now to that ball—no; wait for me. I'll go along with you."

"Will you shout for us, sir?" exclaimed the delighted purloiner of flowers.

"I'll give you my moral support."

After that interview Johnnie was wont of a morning to steal into the chapel and place upon the side of the altar a bunch of flowers. He did fairly well in class, too; so well that he was not seen in jug more than twice a week.

But very soon the season came when flowers were scarce and fallen leaves plentiful.

Then Mr. Murdock said:

“ Johnnie, let the flowers go for the present; but every morning when you come to school, go and tell Our Lord how many *lessons* you know. Tell Him you know them for Him, and that each lesson is a flower.”

Then Johnnie smiled radiantly.

“ I’ll do it, sir.” And he kept his word.

From that day Johnnie “ went juggling ” no more.

The Butt of the School.

I.

ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE had just let out, and the students were making their way homeward.

As one of these, a thin, slight, fair-featured child, reached the end of the square occupied by the college, three boys, who had seemingly been awaiting his coming, sprang forward and put themselves in his wake. Then the trio began to keep step with their mock leader in a noisy, shuffling manner, kicking up dust and dirt with every move forward.

Louis Harold, our thin little friend, flushed deeply, but did not seem to be taken by surprise. Indeed, this strange following was nothing new to him. Almost every afternoon had his steps been thus dogged. On previous occasions he had done nothing to put a stop to this petty persecution. He had simply blushed and moved on with an overwhelming sense of shame and bewilderment.

On this day, however, he changed his tactics.

After walking a short distance along Sycamore Street, with the shuffling and loud stamping of his followers beating in his ear, he turned around, his delicate face pale and quivering, his large blue eyes suspiciously dimmed.

“ Please go away, boys,” he said, and his voice trembled as he spoke. “ I think you’re acting very meanly.”

The three looked at him rather surprised at first, but after a moment’s silence recovered themselves.

“ We want to keep the wind off you, Skinny, so’s you won’t get blown away,” volunteered Fred Harman, the “ funny boy ” of the three; whereupon his companions broke into a laugh.

“ And, besides,” added Willie Rollins, “ we want to keep the dogs away; they might take you for a bone, you know.”

This very venerable joke was received with all the deference due to old age, and the persecutors laughed again.

Louis Harold’s bosom heaved convulsively; he drew his lips tight together and repressed the rising sob. He said nothing, but continued facing them.

“ Aren’t you going on ? ” queried Charlie Ogden, the third member of the facetious band.

Louis made no answer. It was all he could do, indeed, to restrain his feelings of mortification and pain.

After a dead silence the three set about chaffing him with all the ready eloquence of contempt. Nor did they intend to be unkind. It was wit they were aiming at. But wit at another's expense is cruelty; and so these school lads, good-natured enough in general, now made poor Louis a target for the arrows of their scorn, pitilessly plying their shafts till the child's sensitive nature was a mass of wounds.

At last Louis could endure the situation no longer; he turned and fled at the top of his speed.

As soon as the three could adjust their ideas to this turn of affairs they set off after him. But here Louis' light, slim build, I am glad to say, served him in good stead. His pursuers, after chasing him for several minutes, had scarcely gained a yard; and, moreover, were already fetching their breath with difficulty.

"Hold on, boys," panted Fred Harman; "let's let him go, or we'll have him boo-hooing, and that'll spoil the whole joke. We don't want to carry the thing too far."

His companions assented, and, no doubt,

plumed themselves on their moderation. Laughing, therefore, over their little joke, they sought their respective homes.

Their little joke! Ah, yes; but was it a little joke for Louis? The joke that is pleasant on one side only is a pitiable thing indeed.

II.

• I am afraid that Louis found it very difficult to settle down to his studies that evening. His delicate feelings had been sadly lacerated. Through freaks of fortune many have become great in the world's eye; in much the same way many have become little. This latter lot had fallen to Louis. But two weeks of the school year had passed, and yet he had met his fate on the second day.

It was the morning recess. School-boy like, Louis was dashing across the yard, when he slipped and fell in a pool of muddy water occasioned by a recent rain. Now it happened that at that time nearly all the boys, being in great part strangers to one another, were sitting about on the playground benches on the lookout for any novelty. The fall and splash afforded the desired excitement, and Louis became the observed of all. On arising from the puddle the

sight of his mud-bespattered clothes gave rise to a general laugh. The poor child, covered with shame, at once hurried away to a retired corner, seated himself on a bench, and buried his face in his hands. But his troubles had only begun. A youthful wag crept behind while Louis was still absorbed in his feelings of mortification, and pinned upon his jacket a paper with the words:

WANTED

A NO. 1 WHITEWASHER,
NO NIGGERS NEED APPLY.

It is easier to imagine than to describe the scene that ensued when Louis presently arose and walked across the yard. The fun was cut short by a good-natured large boy, who took Louis aside, removed the paper, and helped the victim to repair the damages of mud and water.

The evil, however, had gone too far to be stayed. From that day on Louis, under the nickname of "Skinny," became the butt of the school; which, being interpreted, signifies that he was a mark for the jokes and jibes of all cruel and all thoughtless students.

Nor was he safe with the better class of boys. Even the worst exercise a strong influence; and,

without knowing it, the good are in many cases led by them. So it was in the present case. It is true none of the thoroughly good and thoughtful boys ever treated Louis with downright unkindness. Still they came to look upon him as a "little goose," a "nobody." And their opinion, indeed, seemed to have foundation. In class our Louis seemed to be little more than a dunce. His written exercises, it must be said, were good; and more than once had Mr. Frank, his teacher, praised them highly in presence of the class. But for all that, whenever Louis was asked the simplest lesson his brains seemed to go a-scattering; his answers fell so wide of the mark that it was at times difficult even for the teacher to restrain a smile.

On one occasion—to give an example—Mr. Frank had asked him:

"To what two great commandments may the ten commandments be reduced?"

"To these two," began Louis, and stopped. Then he colored deeply and his fingers twitched nervously.

"Very good, Louis," said Mr. Frank. "Go on; I'm sure you know the rest."

"Thou—thou—thou," reiterated Louis.

"Thou shalt," prompted Mr. Frank.

Suddenly, without a single halt, Louis rattled off as follows:

“Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself; this do and thou shalt live.”

Imagine the sensation created by this new commandment.

And so it came to pass that in spite of his neat and correctly written tasks Louis was the butt of the school.

On the evening following his awkward introduction to the reader he found it a difficult matter to settle down to his lessons. So stormily were the persecutions of the past two weeks surging in his tiny breast that at length he threw his books aside and leaned back in his chair in sad thought. Suddenly a gleam of comfort passed over his features; his eyes had been arrested by a picture over his desk. We all know that picture. Under it were written the words: “Come to Me, all ye that are weary and burdened, and I will refresh you.”

Louis read this sentence into a new meaning. It seemed to be addressed to himself. The invitation was heeded. Louis threw himself upon his knees before the picture of the Sacred Heart.

With prayer came peace—not at once, indeed, but slowly and surely, as the gray streak in the east grows into the perfect splendor of a cloudless day.

And deep in his heart Louis seemed to hear words of sweetness and love from that sweetest of consolers.

Poor Louis! Great need had he for those sweet words; for the morrow was to bring him a still greater humiliation.

III.

It was morning recess on the following day, and Louis, who avoided the playground as much as possible, was hastening over to the reading-room, there to bury himself in his books. As he came within a few paces of the reading-room door it chanced that a heavy-set lad engaged in the delectable game of “tag” bumped against him full force, and our thin little friend literally went “spinning.” But, instead of falling, he in turn collided with Tom Norton, who just then was in the act of catching a thrown base-ball. In the collision Louis came down rather sharply upon the right foot of Tom, and so disturbed that young lover of the national game that, in-

stead of catching the ball in his hand he caught it in the pit of the stomach.

Tom's face flashed from intense pain to intense anger, and, with this latter passion distorting his features, he turned upon Louis. When he recognized the involuntary aggressor his passion seemed to know no bounds.

"You little fool!" he exclaimed. And with open hand he struck Louis a stinging blow on the cheek.

Louis staggered and fell, but arose at once and hastened into the reading-room—the ugly stroke he had just received branded in purple on his delicate features.

Poor Louis! To be called a fool! To be struck! He who in the happy past had felt no touch that was not a caress; heard no word harsher than the kind words of love and sweetness from sister, father, and mother. If Louis had had the appointment of his own death he would have chosen that hour.

As he passed through the yard to his classroom, at the end of recess, he fancied that every eye was fastened pitilessly on his glowing mark of shame. It was indeed a bitter, bitter hour.

As for Tom Norton, he was wretched too. Louis had trod upon Tom's foot where it hap-

pened to be particularly tender. The ball, too, had hit him where one does not enjoy being hit. So it was no wonder he had been vexed. And yet he felt that he had gone too far. The idea that he, a big, strong boy of thirteen, should strike down a thin, puny lad who didn't seem to be fairly ten! Was it not cowardly? The question haunted him.

He was still pondering, when a boy called across the yard to him:

“Norton! Norton, I say! Mr. Frank wants to see you.”

Tom hurried over to Mr. Frank's classroom.

“Well, Tommy,” said Mr. Frank, “you seem to look rather ashamed of yourself.”

Tom glanced inquiringly at Mr. Frank, and at once perceived that his teacher knew all.

“He stepped on my foot, sir—on my *sore* foot.”

“He did? How mean of him! And I suppose he knew it was sore, too.”

“No, sir; he didn't.”

Tom wondered whether his teacher were quizzing him.

“No?” re-echoed Mr. Frank. “Still it was very mean of him to stamp on your foot, even if

he didn't know. I don't wonder you were very angry."

"But he didn't intend to do it, sir; he couldn't help himself," explained Tom, who could not but perceive that Mr. Frank had been leading him on from an attempted defence of his conduct to a naked confession of its culpability.

"Well, at any rate," pursued Mr. Frank, "I don't wonder you became angry."

"I couldn't help it, sir."

"Just so; you weren't prepared for it. If you had been told beforehand what was to happen you might have been prepared."

"That's so, sir."

"Suppose, now, a brick had fallen from the wall on your foot, would it have hurt as much?"

"More, I reckon."

"Then you'd have become angrier still, and you'd have slapped that brick even worse than you did the boy."

Mr. Frank smiled.

Tom smiled in return, and their eyes met. Suddenly Tom's face became serious.

"Mr. Frank," he broke forth, "it is no use talking; I'm a big coward and a bully, and I'm heartily ashamed of myself."

There was sincerity in his honest young face and his flashing eyes.

“ Gently, Tom,” said Mr. Frank, taking his hand. “ You ought to be ashamed of yourself, I allow. But I do not think that you are either a coward or a bully.”

“ But I am, sir. Since I’ve been talking with you everything’s got clearer and clearer. Do you know, sir, I don’t think there’s hardly another boy in the yard I’d have struck but Skinny. You see, it’s this way: none of the fellows think much of him; he’s always getting into trouble and being laughed at, and so I’ve got to look upon him as nobody at all. Now, if it had been somebody else stepped on my foot I mightn’t have struck, because I’d have felt it wouldn’t be reasonable; but with Skinny it was different.”

Mr. Frank listened to this honest confession with close attention; and twice during the narration did his countenance evince surprise.

“ Well, Tom, your act *was* a cowardly act; but one cowardly act doesn’t make a coward any more than one swallow makes a summer. As for being a bully, the very fact that you proclaim yourself a bully proves that you are not. I don’t believe there has yet lived a bully who

could stand up and confess himself as such. But there's something you said just now which interests me very much. You say that Louis Harold—you called him Skinny, I believe—is out of favor with the boys. Tell me all about it."

What Tom told the reader already knows.

"Thank you, thank you very much," said Mr. Frank, when Tom had come to a pause. 'You have thrown light on something that's been puzzling me these last two weeks. And now, helped by what you've told me, I can tell you something in return. Do you know what's the trouble with Louis?'"

"No, sir."

"Simply this. He is an extremely sensitive boy, whose spirit is breaking under ill treatment. Your blow will have a terrible effect on him unless it be atoned for."

Tom fidgeted; he was proud.

"Do you know," continued Mr. Frank, "I was puzzled that Louis could do so well at his themes and so poorly in lessons. Of course I saw that he was bashful; but now I see more. He knew that his classmates were pitiless, and were waiting for him to slip. Well, thank you. You are sorry for your conduct, and I'm sure

you'll do what your conscience suggests to make up for it. Good-by."

Now what Tom's conscience suggested was that he should begin by apologizing. But this to a boy cost a strong effort. Still Tom nerved himself for the attempt, and with sinking heart sought out Louis. He perceived him sitting alone near the class-room building.

Louis, on noticing that Tom was approaching, arose and hurried away.

Tom lost heart.

"He's angry, of course; and I'll get into more trouble if I talk to him."

So he dismissed his resolution with an inward feeling that all was not right. This feeling grew stronger as the school hours moved on; and when class let out Tom Norton was fully as miserable as Louis.

Tom had good qualities; he sought peace where it was to be found. Instead of remaining in the yard to participate, as was his wont, in a game of football, he quietly slipped into the college chapel to pour out his troubles to his Mother Mary and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Like the publican in the Gospel, he took his position near the door; and, kneeling, he begged with bowed head and clasped hands that Mary

his Mother might obtain for him grace and light from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But, for all his prayers, the struggle within him between pride and duty still raged. Duty called on him to apologize; shame endeavored to put the question by. And so he prayed the longer.

Suddenly a sob startled his ears. He raised his head in surprise; for he had thought himself alone. No; he was not. There in front of him, low before the image of the Sacred Heart, was Louis Harold. His eyes, dimmed with tears, were gazing upward in supplication to the Refuge of the persecuted. And as Tom Norton took in the scene grace flashed into his soul.

Apologize! He would apologize, cost what it might. With the resolution a spirit of peace and sweet devotion came upon him such as he had never before experienced. And with this spirit upon him he fell into an earnest prayer for pardon.

When he again raised his head Louis had disappeared.

On leaving the chapel Tom repaired to the room of the prefect of studies. Here he obtained Louis' address, and was not a little surprised to find that the boy lived quite close to his own home.

“ Thank God,” he murmured, “ I shall be able to atone all the better.”

IV.

It was a bitter evening for Louis Harold. Despite his visit to the Sacred Heart, despite his prayers, his soul was tossed about on a sea of passion. It has already been said that he appeared to be scarcely ten years of age; as a matter of fact, he was something more than eleven, and, being of an intensely sensitive disposition, some of his passions were developed beyond his years. As on the preceding evening, he found it impossible to put his mind to study; prayer, too, was beset with distractions. There seemed to be a demon in his heart whispering him in words of hatred and rage. In vain—seemingly, at least—did he recall the memory of Our Saviour, scoffed, struck, and derided; the demon’s voice bore in upon him the stronger.

His mother, one of the kindest of mothers, was in the next room. Might he not, he reflected, go to her with his troubles? But no; he would not make her unhappy with his unhappiness. He would fight it out; he would forgive. Again the demon voice grew strong.

What an unkind thing to strike down a small boy for a mere accident! Louis began to tremble. He was in danger of falling. So intense were his feelings of revenge and hatred that he knew, should he give way to them, he would sully his soul with the sin of hatred. It was a perilous moment. But grace made him equal to the occasion. Yet, vanquished for the time, the thought presently returned. At length, when the temptation had become so strong that he was struggling almost despairingly in its toils, there came a knock at the door. "Come in," cried Louis, arising from his kneeling posture and hastily passing his hands through his dishevelled hair.

His sister Nellie, a bright-faced, pretty child of seven, entered.

"Why, Louie!" she exclaimed, stopping short just beyond the threshold, and opening her eyes in wonder, "what's the matter? You look just horrid."

"Oh, I'm all right!" answered Louis, as he endeavored, vainly enough, to greet his sister with the customary smile of love.

"Here," cried Nellie, getting on tiptoe and giving him a kiss. "Now, you ought to feel better. I think, Louie, you must have trouble

at that old school. Boys are such horrid things—I hate 'em all, except you, of course. And most of them are freckle-faced, and the rest don't know how to comb their hair. The only 'spectable boys I know are boys what have nice sisters to take care of them."

"Well," said Louis, forgetting for the moment his troubles while listening to this masterly harangue, "did you come here and break up my studies for the sake of giving me your opinion on boys and their sisters?"

"Oh, that's a fact! I was very near forgetting all about it. There's a boy in the parlor who says he wants to see you."

"A boy wants to see me!" echoed Louis.

"A b-o-y—boy; and he wants to see you, Louie. But before you go let me fix you up a little. Take off your jacket."

And with this, little Miss Nellie procured a towel, wet it, and with the most matronly air imaginable proceeded to wash the face of her big brother. She then combed his hair, and, it must be confessed, acquitted herself of the task with a skill which her brother, when left to his own resources, could admire, but not imitate. During all these pretty offices there was a constant skirmishing. Louis, provoking boy, would

start and fidget; and in consequence received several taps and grave rebukes from the wise matron of seven summers.

But the pleasant war came to an end; and as he descended the stairs to the parlor every thought of his trouble had vanished.

Besides the angels, God has other sweet and gracious means for drawing our hearts upward.

But when Louis entered the parlor the events of the day came back in a flash; for there before him stood Tom Norton. With something like a gasp Louis drew back, the muscles of his face twitching violently and his complexion growing ashen pale.

Tom came forward, held out his hand, and endeavored to smile.

“Don’t run off, Louie; you don’t know how mean I feel. I’m real sorry—awful sorry—sure. Come on, old fellow, and shake hands.”

Louis’ lips quivered with something like a smile; the hard lines of his face relaxed; his eyes softened into tenderness. The almost instantaneous change was at once beautiful and touching. He held out his hand, which Tom grasped cordially.

“You’re a real good fellow, Louie,” blurted forth Tom, now smiling freely, and unconsciously

throwing aside the awkwardness which had distinguished his apology; "and if you and I aren't going to be the best of friends and classmates it won't be my fault. I'm a rough sort of a fellow; but if you want a friend you can count on me every time. What do you say, Louie? Shall you and I be friends?"

The smile and the beautiful expression which had come over Louis' face in the first moments of their hearty hand-grasp had during these friendly words been succeeded by a twitching and quivering of every nerve.

"Tom—" but he could restrain his feelings no longer; weeping and sobbing he sank into a chair.

Somewhat astonished, Tom closed the parlor door, seated himself beside Louie, and put his arm about the weeping child. He said nothing, but awaited in silent sympathy.

"Excuse me," pleaded Louis, when the first violence of his emotion had passed, "but I couldn't help it, I really couldn't. I didn't expect such kindness from any living boy."

"Oh, pshaw! I haven't been any too kind. But from this out you'll see I'll behave the right way."

"You're the first boy that ever gave me a

kind word since I've started going to school. Oh! you don't know how I've suffered. I never cried much up to this; but when you spoke just now I felt as though another life had begun."

Tom Norton must have had some peculiar magnetic power over Louis; for in the conversation that ensued the child gave utterance for the first time to all his troubles. And the confession benefited our little friend. With the recital his childish griefs seemed to vanish into thin air, leaving him a bright-eyed, quick, and happy American boy.

Tom Norton spent the evening with his new friend. They "did" their themes together, ran over the next morning's recitations, and, after further talk, separated for the night, two of the merriest, two of the happiest boys in Cincinnati.

Many years may come and go over their heads, many days now memorable to them may be crushed into oblivion by the strong hand of time; but this day, when each conquered himself in the fight for love and justice, shall stand out in their lives and memories with the peace and beauty and unchangeableness of a star.

V.

Brighter days were now in store for Louis; but the horizon was not entirely clear as yet. Tom Norton, after all, was but one of a large school, and his influence, though strong, had its limits. What influence he had, however, he used to good purpose.

With Mr. Frank's permission he sat beside Louis in the class-room; and on the very morning of the change he nodded so cheerily when Louis was asked the lesson that our little friend took heart and went through his recitation in a manner that astonished the class and caused Mr. Frank to radiate happiness.

Nor did Tom's efforts stop here. In the course of the day he put Louis upon terms of friendship with Ed Ronald, Frank Trainer, Charlie Walker, and others of Mr. Frank's best and most genial pupils of the preceding year.

For all this, there remained a leaven of the ancient unkindness. After school Tom and Louis generally walked home together. But one afternoon Louis, unable to find Tom, started off alone. He had not fairly turned the corner, when behold the old trio in the old way were again at his heels.

A moment later Tom Norton came hurrying out of the college gate. As he turned the corner and took in the situation, he broke into a dash. The three persecutors were linked arm in arm, happily ignorant that there was a new member bringing up the rear of their procession. They became vividly aware of this fact, though, when Tom put a sturdy hand on each of the outer heads and brought them bumping with some energy against the third head.

There was an immediate unlocking of arms, a triple howl of pain; and then three dazed lads stood holding their hands to their heads with a picturesque unanimity of gesture.

“What did you do that for?” sputtered Fred Harman, who, having been the middleman of the three, had a hand applied to two sides of his head, as though it were winter, and he were suffering for lack of ear-muffs.

Tom gave the Hibernian answer.

“What were you fellows dogging Louie Harold for?”

“Oh, just for fun!”

“You don’t say! Well, that’s what I knocked your heads together for—just for fun.”

“It wasn’t very funny, I can tell you,” said Willie Rollins.

“ Well, I can tell you,” retorted Tom, with flashing eyes, “ it’ll be a heap funnier next time. I’ll hold your heads together and rub down your ears to the natural size, you miserable little cowards! You’d better clear off now; and don’t you try bullying Louie Harold again.”

From that day forth persecution was at an end. Louis contrived to grow brighter and happier, till, by degrees, his excessive timidity completely disappeared, and he rose to be one of the leaders of his class.

But he never forgot the sufferings of those first weeks; nor did Tom Norton. The very fact that a fellow-student was friendless, unnoticed, or timid sufficed to induce these two friends to take him up. And so there gradually came upon the class a term of lasting peace and sweet charity.

Freddie's Fishing Adventure.

I.

IT was the dawn of a beautiful morning toward the end of August. Seated in the stern of a dainty boat attached to the landing-place, holding his rod in a firm grasp, and gazing out upon the mirror-like face of the waters, Mr. Robin, who had just succeeded in making a cast of some seventy odd feet, looked every inch a fisherman.

He was still inwardly congratulating himself on the cast when his reel suddenly gave a rapid succession of clicks, while his pole bent almost double.

“ Hurrah!” he exclaimed under his breath, as he jumped to his feet; “ this time I've a big fish sure.” And he began playing his victim with the dexterity of a practised hand.

On this occasion, indeed, he found it necessary to bring all his skill into play. The fish with which he had to deal entertained views of its own on the solemnity of life—views which it

conveyed to its captor by a variety of vigorous tactics. It began to air these views by starting out for mid-lake at the speed of a limited express—so at least Mr. Robin fancied—and it was only by the judicious and swift playing out of ever so many yards of his line that the excited angler succeeded in saving his delicate fishing outfit from total wreck. Even as it was, the strain upon line and pole was for a time intense; but desperate endeavor is short-lived; the rod presently unbent and the reel ceased clicking. The fish had called a halt. But Mr. Robin, who had an idea of allowing his prey a moment's respite, at once set about reeling in. Fishy, however, was in no humor for a rest just then; and no matter how fast Mr. Robin wound and wound, it contrived by fast swimming toward the landing to keep the line slack.

Just as Mr. Robin was about to resort to new devices, there was a great splash twenty feet beyond the boat; and his heart jumped into his mouth as he discerned the author of the splash—a great, savage pike.

What a flying leap it was! Indeed, one would have thought that the struggling captive wore wings. The sight set Mr. Robin's pulse into a madder gallop. Well, to be brief, after ten

minutes of steady playing, Mr. Robin landed his fish, and stood panting, breathless, gloating over his conquered and now thoroughly exhausted adversary, the happiest man in Wisconsin; and he was still gazing, still panting, when the clatter of hoofs smote upon his ear.

“It's Freddie!” he exclaimed, as he turned his head to greet the new arrival.

Freddie it was, mounted on a black pony, and coming down the road at such a pace that his blue sash and long golden hair streamed in the faint breeze of sunrise.

“What luck, papa?” cried the little lad, as he drew within speaking distance.

“Glorious!” responded the happy parent. “Look at this, Freddie; the biggest pike I ever saw out of the water.”

Freddie gave a little gurgle of joy, threw the reins over his pony's neck, alighted, and hastened to put himself beside his father.

“Oh, my!” he piped. “What a tremendous fish!”

“Isn't it, Freddie? It beats the record on this lake. Is your mamma up yet?”

“Yes, indeed, papa; she and sister Lucy are taking their breakfast.”

“Very good; they must see my catch at once.

Here"—Mr. Robin suspended his sentence to put a fat minnow on his hook and make a fresh cast; then continued—"you hold this pole for a few minutes while I bring our pike up to the hotel."

Still in a glow of excitement, Mr. Robin caught up his fish, mounted the pony, and departed at a trot, leaving Freddie in sole possession of rod and boat.

As we are nearing the curious part of this veracious story, it is well to know something definite of Freddie's appearance.

He was a very pretty, blue-eyed child of seven, and was arrayed in the neatest and tastiest of riding suits. It is important to keep in mind that his snow-white collar, large as it was, was concealed from view in front by a wide-spreading "butterfly" of many hues. His legs below the knee were encased in black silk stockings, and his low shoes were fitted with a pair of shining silver spurs.

So there stood Freddie in the boat, his blue eyes sparkling under his golden hair; his bright face all the brighter for the smile of happiness that parted his lips and revealed the white, regular teeth; all the prettier for the tints of the rose, which the morning ride had deepened upon

either cheek. Freddie was a passionate lover of fishing, and looked upon all other sports as dross in the comparison.

But suddenly his face clouded. The memory of his mother flashed through his mind. Had he not promised her never to fish without some older companion at his side? Freddie was a thoroughly good boy, and a thoroughly good boy is ever obedient. With but a moment's hesitation he made the sacrifice; and suppressing manfully the suspicion of a little sob, he began to reel in the line with an alacrity which, under the circumstances, was heroic.

But fish, as the sequel will show, are foolish creatures. All save twenty feet of the line had Freddie wound in when there came such a jerk and a pull that the reel slipped from his fingers, and, indeed, it was by great good luck that he succeeded even in keeping the pole secure in his little hands.

Whiz—whirl—click—whiz—whirl—went the reel as the line flew out into the water with such speed as to force Freddie to close his eyes for very dizziness.

He opened them quickly, however, and catching the whirling reel, put a stop to its revolutions, and brought the line taut. This was an

unfortunate thing for Freddie. The sudden strain was too much for him, and still holding the rod in his hands, over he toppled into the water.

Now Freddie could not swim a stroke.

II.

Instead of rising to the surface, as is customary with people who take sudden dives, Freddie found himself with his feet firmly set upon the sandy bottom in fifteen feet of water, gazing about him in no little astonishment. The water was fairly swarming with fish. There was a countless number of perch, silver, rock, and black bass, and a great many members of the finny tribe such as Freddie had never so much as imagined. Here and there might be seen a staring wall-eyed pike or a savage-looking pickerel. Nearly all the fishes whose eyes Freddie caught gave him a friendly nod of welcome; not all, however. The pickerels shook their tails at him, and opened their large, ugly mouths in a menacing manner. Evidently they were angry.

But he had little time to wonder at these strange sights, for his attention was almost immediately diverted by the violent jerks at his line. Following its direction, he perceived that

a huge pike was making violent efforts to free his mouth from Mr. Robin's hook. On catching Freddie's eye the pike ceased his struggles.

"You young rascal!" he stuttered—for the hook in his mouth interfered somewhat with the distinctness of his enunciation—"I've caught you."

"Don't call any names, please," retorted Freddie politely, "and excuse me when I say that I think I've caught you."

"Not at all," snapped the pike with a great sneeze, caused, doubtless, by the hook, "and I'll just trouble you to let go that pole. I want to go out in deep water. There's a famous wall-eyed pike out there who is given to dentistry, and who extracts hooks without pain."

"Indeed I won't!" Freddie made answer. "This line is my papa's, and you, Mr. Pike, belong to him too."

While this conversation was going on, fishes had been swimming to the scene of action from all sides. They formed into knots and groups, and, for the most part, appeared to be discussing the situation with admirable gravity. Not so the pikes, however. Their comments were of a noisier order, and their gesticulations were especially energetic. The pickerels, too, showed

signs of temper. Nor is the explanation far to seek. The pickerel, as we all know, is nearly related to the pike; and even in the case of fishes blood is thicker than water.

On the other hand, the pretty little perches could not do enough to show their welcome to the wanderer from the realms of air. All during the foregoing dialogue they were nodding and bowing to Freddie, and at each of the little lad's retorts they testified their approbation in all manner of curious and fish-like ways. Some relieved their feelings by turning double somersaults; others, by standing on their heads and trying to wink, in which last attempt, to tell the truth, they were far from successful, nature having denied the finny tribe some of the requisites that go to the producing of a wink. One infant perch, an innocent fellow, who knew little of the manners and customs of the small boy, came swimming up to Freddie with the offer of a very fine fat worm, which he had just secured, and was taken aback not a little when Freddie refused the wriggling prize. Indeed, the perch's feelings were quite bruised, and he would probably have burst into tears of mortification had not his mamma taken him aside, and, while gently stroking his forehead, explained that the

small boy's taste does not incline him to the regulation perch diet. For the rest, the silver, rock, and black bass seemed to be amused, but showed no decided leaning toward either faction.

"Once more," resumed the captive, "will you let go that rod or not?"

"Not," replied Freddie sententiously.

"Well, look out for squalls, then." And with a rush and a squeak the pike dashed straight at our little friend.

"Fight! fight!" roared a hideous, rakish dog-fish, rubbing his fins with delight. The dog-fishes are the lowest characters of the lakes.

On came the pike, head down, determination written in his eye, while Freddie stood stock-still, puzzled as to what measures he should take to repel the onslaught. He could use but one hand, for the other was employed in holding the rod. The fish, however, giving him little time to deliberate, made for his black silk stockings. Naturally enough Freddie kicked vigorously. Presto! there came a groan from the fish.

"I'm stabbed!" he called out. "Bring a surgeon!"

He had spoken truly. Freddie's spurs had given him a slight wound; and so disconcerted was the doughty pike that he withdrew at once

to a safe distance, muttering as he went, "You don't fight fair."

"I don't want to fight at all," returned Freddie; "but just the same, I'm not going to let any fish bite at my legs if I can help myself. It isn't pleasant."

"Very well," sighed the pike, after a few moments given to deliberation. "If you don't choose to let go that rod, I'll pull you along with me." And turning quickly, he set off with all his strength for the interior of the lake.

The pike was, beyond doubt, an able swimmer. Freddie was lifted off his feet, and pulled along, his toes just touching upon the sandy bottom. Still, it was slow work; and presently the poor pike was panting heavily, and, if we may use the expression, out of breath. Reduced to this state, he stopped short and summoned a few of his friends to his side. Together they held a whispered consultation, and finally hit upon a new plan of action. Two of the very largest pikes put themselves on each side of the captive, and, taking a part of the leader in their mouths, joined forces with their afflicted friend in towing Freddie along.

And now something very strange came to pass. You remember that Freddie, with his

long golden hair and blue sash, had a gaudy tie and shining silver spurs. Well, as the little lad went drifting along quite rapidly, he began to whirl round and round. Now imagine a small boy thus dressed whirling round and round below the surface of the water. He looked for all the world like a very large *spoon-hook* attached to a trolling line.

Certainly one fish was deceived; for as they were getting into very deep waters, a large black bass, on catching sight of the revolving Freddie, concluded that he was an overgrown minnow, and with a quick dash made a savage snap at his little legs.

“Keep off! Go away!” shouted Freddie, as he kicked vigorously. “I’m not fish bait.”

“Oh! I beg your pardon a thousand times,” said the big black bass politely. “I was never so deceived in all my life. Upon my word, young sir, you’re the very image of a magnified minnow. But what are you doing here, may I ask? By this time you should of right be drowned. Most people find it utterly impossible to breathe under water.”

So friendly was the address, so kindly the glance of the big black bass, that Freddie without hesitation told him the whole history of his

fishing adventure up to the moment of their odd introduction.

“ Ah! I see, I see,” said the old fellow, shaking his solemn head, as Freddie came to a pause. “ You’re an obedient boy, that’s why you didn’t drown. I like you, young sir; indeed I do. I like all obedient young people. I’m a family man myself, sir, and I know how sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.” And as he delivered himself of this Shakespearean remark, the family man clasped his fins in a gesture of resignation.

He went on:

“ One of my children—my eighty-third son, young sir—was wild and dissipated. He used to stay out late of nights, and associated with some of the most disorderly dog-fishes and mud-cats in our neighborhood. He was given to drink, too; used water only for swimming purposes. One afternoon, when he was slightly under the influence of liquor, and wouldn’t come home, though his elder brother used every means short of physical force to induce him, he swaggered off toward the eastern shore, and there, near the bank, allowed himself to be caught by one of the awkwardest fishermen that ever made a cast. It was a very disgraceful

affair indeed—disgraceful to be caught at all, much more so to fall a prey to an amateur fisherman of the deepest dye. The family pride has never recovered from the blow.”

Here the big black bass sniffed audibly, and a great tear dropped from his left eye. But with a strong effort he mastered his emotion, and added:

“ Enough; these are unpleasant memories. My dear young sir, can I do you any favor? I am entirely at your service.”

“ Well,” said Freddie, “ I’d like a breath of fresh air.”

“ Can you ride horseback? ”

“ I use a pony every day, sir.”

“ Very good; then there’s no trouble about it at all. I’ll be your horse.”

The bass put himself in position; Freddie straddled his back, and secured himself on his seat by holding on with one hand to the fish’s dorsal fin. The bass then rose to within a few feet of the surface, so that his rider’s head just overtopped the water; and swimming lightly in the wake of the pike, he contrived to so lessen the strain on the line that the whole string moved along with increased speed.

Freddie looked about him. Strange! the

shores were low black lines above the horizon, miles and miles away. And yet the lake was scarcely two miles wide and but a little over three miles in length. While he was still pondering over this mystery, he felt a sudden tug at his heel. Looking down, he was astonished to discover a fine perch hanging to the spur on his right foot. Poor little perch had mistaken the flashing spur for a minnow popularly called the "shiner." Remembering the kind welcome extended him by the perches, Freddie released the little fish, who indeed was very grateful, and apologized with effusion for his awkward mistake.

This incident had brought all to the middle of the lake, whereupon the pickerel trio began moving more slowly, and at length stopped. There was a moment's pause, — then down, down darted the pickerels, straight as a plumb-line, for the bottom. During his descent, which, though rapid, lasted a minute, Freddie cast his eyes about him eagerly. He observed that it was a lonely neighborhood; for some time, indeed, he could distinguish no living thing. All at once, as it were, from beneath his feet there started a monstrous and most extraordinary-looking fish. For want of a better name Freddie

called this creature a wall-eyed pike; he had his doubts, though, as to the fitness of the name, for of all the pike fishes he had ever seen, this one was certainly the first to appear in public wearing a pair of blue goggles.

“ Bless me! ” exclaimed he of the blue goggles. “ What’s the meaning of this novel procession? and what are you doing here, little boy? ” and, looking inquiringly into the open face of Freddie, who, at a hint from his friend the bass, had dismounted and made his best bow, he laid his tail upon the boy’s wrist and awaited the answer.

With the frankness of innocent years, Freddie related his adventures.

“ Good boy! ” exclaimed the wall-eyed pike with the blue goggles, when Freddie had made an end of his narration. “ And what you have said is truth, every word of it; for your pulse was regular all the time you were speaking. A little boy cannot lie without his pulse beating faster. I am a doctor, I am, and belong to the old school.”

Here the speaker paused for effect; taking advantage of which the captive broke in with the account of his grievances. With unutterable gravity the ancient pike gave ear.

“ So, then, you want me to extract that hook without pain, do you? ”

“ Yes, doctor, please, ” answered the plaintiff, endeavoring to look pious and agreeable.

“ As doctor, ” returned the member of the old school with no small degree of majesty in word and address, “ I would willingly do so; but— ” and here the old gentleman took off his goggles, slapped his chest with both lateral fins, and became, if possible, yet more majestic—“ as Justice of the Peace for this lake district, I must pursue another course. ”

At these words the captive pike turned pale, while beads of perspiration stood out upon his long, slanting forehead. His two friends hung their heads, one of them making a mouth as though he were endeavoring to whistle.

“ You may well tremble, ” continued the venerable squire, his voice borrowing majesty from his wrath, “ for your goings-on are but too well known to me. Beyond a doubt, you are the worst robber in my district; and I have long since made up my mind that it would be a good thing for our glorious commonwealth could it be rid of your presence. Now, listen to your sentence, and be silent that you may hear. You are hereby given over to this little boy, who, in

turn, is to deliver you to his father. Your associates are solemnly warned not to interfere with the execution of justice. Lo! I have spoken."

"O wise judge!" cried our friend, the black bass, "I—I who speak to you—shall see to it that your decision be carried out to the very letter."

The wise judge waved his fins as a sign that court was adjourned; Freddie remounted his faithful charger, and, taking the lead this time, off he rode for the landing-place with the captive, who now made no show of resistance, in his wake. On this homeward course Freddie recognized the landmarks—watermarks, if you will—that he had already passed over with as much ease as though he were a regular traveller through these subaqueous regions.

Everything went quite smoothly till they came within thirty feet of the boat; then suddenly the black bass slipped away, the water grew dark, Freddie sank, and feeling a choking sensation, he realized that unless he could rise to the surface he would drown. Up he rose with a bound, and, as his head emerged from the water, he heard his father's voice. He turned his head in the direction whence the sound came, in time to see his father plunging from the pier. With

a few vigorous strokes Mr. Robin reached his boy, grasped the little hand as it reached from below, and with another stroke, and another, conveyed him safely to the shore.

I am afraid that Freddie and his parents never came to understand each other as regards his adventure. I have told Freddie's story. They maintain that Freddie plunged overboard just as they came within easy reach of the boat, and that on his rising to the surface he was at once rescued.

However this may be, two things are certain: first, that Freddie, in giving up, in intention at least, his chance to fish, proved himself to be an obedient boy. Secondly, that, on the line's being examined, there actually was found at the end of it an extremely large pike, so tired and dejected in appearance as to give color to the statement that it really had been dragging Freddie through the underwastes of waters.

The Children of the Snow.

A CARNIVAL STORY.

IT is a wild afternoon in early February. The last rays of the sun are shining faintly upon a wild stretch of bare, level land—bare and level but for one solitary tree which stands alone, gaunt and grim, flinging out its naked branches to the eastern wind in seeming mute protestation of its loneliness. The sky, save in the west, where it is still blue and open, is of a dull leaden hue; it frowns down upon this open level, desolation frowning upon desolation. The sun's rays throw some little relief upon the nether gloom, but even their light is wild and weird, the light of a stormy sunset, and as it dips below the western rim, the shadowy form of the twilight steals apace over the scene, while her coming is heralded by a sudden dropping of the heavens in feathery flakes, which, falling in many swaying motions, lend to the last gleams of the dying day a pensive beauty. Softly fall these pretty

messengers of the sky, eddying about in an elfin dance, as they find their way wearily to the dull-gray earth and charm it into sudden splendor. Faster, thicker they fall, gathering strength of number with the deepening twilight, till the solitary desolation becomes beautiful with the radiant wedding-garment of winter.

Solitary desolation! Is there not a sound of silvery laughter upon the silent air? And who are these that walk along this tract of desolation? One would think they had come with the snow—dropped down gently from above—from some twinkling star of a fairer clime. Hand in hand they walk—a little lass, clothed all in white—a little lad, his black coat shining with snow-drops.

The girl is as beautiful of face as of dress. From her hair, rising in rich luxuriance over her forehead and falling in wavy masses below her shoulders, there sparkles a precious jewel—it sparkles bright and beautiful—but is a meaner beauty in comparison with the light that shines from her eyes, beautiful, deep, dark eyes, that look out upon the world in all the sweet innocence of a life made up of love and goodness and undoubting confidence. Her face is of a rich olive tint, and every feature is delicate, regular,

and noble. About her shoulders is thrown a cloak, soft and white as the frolicking snow; her dress, too, is of snowy white, varied by no other color than the pearl necklace about her throat.

Singularly like the girl is the boy—his complexion a shade deeper, his eyes a shade darker, and taller by several inches. His great coat, spangled by snowdrops, is thrown back, revealing his ruffled shirt, from the bosom of which gleam two jewelled studs, and a bright-colored silk handkerchief about his neck.

The incongruity of their situation does not seem to dawn upon them, for they are laughing and chatting, in silvery tones, which should charm even the silence.

“Aren't they nice, these pretty snowflakes?” says the little one, speaking in Italian.

“Yes, my Teresa,” answers the boy; “they are very beautiful indeed.”

“Won't papa be surprised when he finds us out here to meet him?”

“Surely; that is, if we do not miss him. You see when I proposed that we should come out to meet him coming home I didn't think that it would begin to snow.”

“That's so,” said Teresa. “If it begins to fall faster we may not be able to see; and then

our little trick to please papa may fail. You know the way, Giovanni, do you not?"

"Oh, that's no trouble," answered Giovanni, evasively. "All we have to do is to walk straight on. We can do that no matter how hard it snows."

"And besides," added the girl, "mamma can see down through the snowflakes just as easily as though it were not snowing at all. Doesn't it seem long since mamma went to heaven?"

"It is long, Teresa. She's been happy for—why, it is just one year to-night since she kissed us good-by, and told us that she would wait for us with God."

"Yes, Giovanni; and she told us not to cry, and to remember that we should all soon meet again."

Here Teresa dashed forward and began catching the snowdrops in her little hands. As she moved lightly among the falling flakes she looked like a perfect creature of the snow. But even as she flitted about as airily almost as the circling crystals, the air grew denser and denser till there seemed to be a thick white curtain shutting them off from all the world. Teresa hastened to regain her brother's hand. Looking up earnestly into his eyes, she said:

“ Giovanni, do you think we shall get lost? ”

Giovanni answered the question after a moment's pause. But in that pause there came a change over his life and character—a change so complete and startling that it is nameless.

He had never known a trouble—never encountered a danger. But now! He realized it at once; he and Teresa were alone in a snow-storm upon a vast prairie, with nothing to guide them to safety and shelter.

“ Teresa,” he answered, “ we may get lost, but I'll take care of you. Do you trust me, my little sister? ” and Giovanni bent his head and looked anxiously into Teresa's eyes.

The sister for answer threw her arms about his neck and kissed him. Then, with a mighty responsibility upon him, Giovanni pushed forward.

“ Remember, Teresa, this is carnival—the last day. To-morrow will be Ash Wednesday. ”

“ Am I not dressed for carnival? ” answered Teresa. “ Oh! wasn't it beautiful the year before last at Rome! You remember, Giovanni? ”

“ Yes, indeed; the Corso was like a picture out of a fairy-book when you and I and mamma

and papa sat upon our balcony and threw confetti upon all the gay people below.”

“ Didn’t some of them look funny,” exclaimed Teresa, her eyes gleaming with the pleasure of memory. “ Such queer masks! Why, there was one with a donkey’s head—and he brayed just lovely—it was so like a donkey.”

“ Yes; and then the race. Wasn’t it exciting to see the horses come tearing down the corso, and the people with faces like barrels, and the funny-looking fellows with caps and bells, and the shepherdesses rushing out of the way, and shouting and screaming. And then the pretty banners from all the houses, and the damasks and streamers, and the Pope’s colors; and, Giovanni, *mio*, our bright blue Italian sky above it all—ugh! It wasn’t a bit like this ugly American sky.”

“ Yes; but our sky never sent us such pretty snow as this,” said Giovanni.

“ That’s true,” said Teresa. “ And, Giovanni, just after the race, do you remember the little girl and the boy, dressed so beautifully, who sang and danced beneath our balcony, and papa threw them a piece of gold? ”

In answer to this Giovanni carolled a pretty, gay air, redolent of the carnival.

“ Oh! ” cried Teresa, clapping her hands, “ that’s the very thing they sang. I’m getting cold, Giovanni. Let’s play we’re in Rome, and the carnival is going on.”

With which the girl took a few steps forward, and swinging her arms above her head as though she were playing upon a tambourine, moved through the steps of a dance, fairy-like in its grace and beauty, while Giovanni with fuller voice, a beautiful treble, brought from a land where voices are sweetest and art is a heritage even of the peasant, carolled forth a song so sweet and light and gay, you would think it had come from Paradise; and heedless of the snow and dying light, the little one, more than ever like a child of snow and air, pirouetted gayly about in a witchery of motion that brought the carnival spirit upon the little singer, who, catching her hand, joined her in beating the whitened earth with light feet till the two, tripping about in perfect abandon to the sweet melody still carolled forth by the brother, rivalled in grace of motion the whirling messengers of the air.

“ Ah! ” said Teresa, stooping to the ground and seizing some snow in her delicate hands, “ here are our confetti. There! ” And she tossed the snow in her brother’s face.

With a light laugh, the brother ended his carol, and, returning the charge, the two were soon engaged in a mimic warfare.

“Giovanni,” said Teresa, when, after their mock hostilities, she had regained her breath, “do you think we shall meet papa?”

“We intended to, Teresa. But perhaps now that it’s snowing we may miss him. He may pass by us. But God is good. We’ll find him to-morrow.”

“Where did papa go?”

“He went to see a man who lives in the country twelve miles farther on, about important business. When papa settles that we are going back to Rome.”

“Dear Rome! and the blue sky, and the high palaces! Oh! how I wish we’d meet papa.”

“We’ll meet him soon, my sister.”

Poor Giovanni! Poor Teresa! Their father had met the man with whom he had important business, and was now lying on the plains with his face turned to the sky.

“You’re getting tired, my dear one,” said Giovanni, half an hour later, noticing that Teresa was moving on with difficulty.

“I’m cold, Giovanni, and I’m sleepy. Ask God to send papa.”

“ Ah! ” cried Giovanni, “ here’s a place to rest—this tree. Here, my dear one, put your head against the trunk.”

Teresa threw herself wearily upon the snow. Giovanni wrapped her up cozily about the shoulders.

“ Are your feet cold, Teresa? ”

“ A little, Giovanni; it’s nothing.”

Giovanni threw off his coat.

“ No, brother, put it on again.”

“ I don’t need it, Teresa.”

“ You must not, Giovanni; ” and Teresa’s eyes filled with tears of entreaty.

“ Oh, I’ve a splendid idea, ” cried Giovanni, throwing off his jacket. “ I don’t need my jacket at all. I don’t suffer from cold much; ” and Giovanni resuming his coat wrapped his jacket snugly about the feet and stockings of his sister. As he was doing this he noticed that her eyes were closing, and his heart sank.

“ Teresa! Teresa! ” he cried.

“ What, Giovanni? ” she answered, opening her eyes and smiling sweetly.

“ Teresa, my dear little one, ” said Giovanni, in soft, tender tones, “ you mustn’t go to sleep before you say your prayers.”

“ Oh, dear no! Hear me say them, Gio-

vanni." And at once the child, assisted by her brother, took a kneeling position and repeated the sweet words learned from a mother's lips.

"Teresa," continued Giovanni, "I want you to say one more prayer with me. It's an act of the love of God, and I want you to try and love Him, when you say it, as much as you can."

"I'll try, brother."

And together from their innocent hearts they poured the prayer which such souls as theirs may best interpret aright.

"Now, little sister, I'll watch."

"Good-night, my Giovanni. How I wish it was morning, so I could see your dear face! Good-night." And Teresa's eyes closed wearily.

No sooner was Giovanni assured that she was fast asleep than he took off his coat and tucked it tenderly about the little form. The little man—he was only nine—shivered and shook as the cold blast beat upon his frail form thus rudely exposed. But he cared little could he but save the gentle life under his charge.

The snow was now beating down in rougher mood. It was sharp and biting. Giovanni drew out a handkerchief and placed it lightly over the upturned face. Then kneeling beside

his sister he prayed and shivered. Presently he grew faint, and fell beside the quiet form.

He was still brave and hopeful.

“Take me, God; let my little sister live.” Then bringing himself close to Teresa he withdrew the handkerchief from her face and kissed her thrice. The sweet eyes opened, and the lips parted in a smile of love.

“Good-night, Giovanni,” whispered Teresa.

“Good-night, Teresa;” and as he spoke her eyes closed again, his head sank beside hers, and cheek to cheek they took their rest.

The sun rose next day upon a land all clad in white—clad in white as far as the eye could reach, save where beneath that lone tree two faces fixed in beauty, lovely in innocence, appeared above the snow in the mighty calm which mortal life knows not.

They were found that day, but no one learned whence they had come. They were called the Children of the Snow.

Their carnival had begun.

Charley's Victory.*

ONE bright Sunday morning, towards the beginning of winter, a goodly number of college boarders were assembled in the chapel to hold their monthly meeting in honor of the Sacred Heart. Among the members, on this day, was one whose name had but recently been entered on the list of candidates. Charley Adams was just turned fifteen; and any one who has had dealings with students knows that it is usually between the fourteenth and eighteenth years that a boy makes or unmakes his character. Many a little lad, whose waywardness had cost his professor countless acts of patience, suddenly turns about at this period, and takes the path that leads to noble manhood; and, alas that it should be so! many a child whose face had been the mirror of angelic innocence finds him-

* I venture to publish this story, chiefly for the reason that it was my first attempt at writing for publication. It appeared originally in the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*.

self, at the age of fifteen, turning aside into that "broad way that leadeth unto perdition."

And which path had Charley chosen? Neither, as yet. He was standing almost irresolute at the cross-road, urged on the one hand by God's grace, and on the other rudely impelled by the forces of developing passions. Charley was of a high temper, and many a bright day had been clouded to him by some strong ebullition of passion, produced by real or fancied insult. If it be true, as spiritual writers tell us, that great sensitiveness is often the prelude to great saintliness, Charley Adams had the making of a great servant of God.

But now he was sitting in the chapel feeling almost unconsciously that the grand light of a new life was shining upon his soul. It was the light of meekness, the light of love; that light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world—the burning Heart of Jesus. He listened with intense interest to the words of the eloquent priest, who spoke of the unalterable meekness of the divine Heart. But he was specially impressed when the Father spoke of the blow Jesus had received from the servant of the high-priest. So feelingly did the speaker express himself, that Charley seemed to behold

Jesus turning His mild but saddened eye, and requesting the servant to give testimony of the evil, if evil He had spoken.

The services were concluded with Benediction. Charley left the chapel with a new and noble purpose in his breast. Oftentimes he had bewailed his sensitiveness, but now he looked upon it as a precious gift. And Charley was determined to imitate the meekness of Our Lord. That day (though he little knew it) was to afford his resolve a terrible test.

At six o'clock of that evening, all the boys were assembled in the hall of studies. Charley passed the hour in hard work, and when the bell rang for recess he hurried to the yard, and made straight for the gymnasium. The twilight was fast merging into darkness, and it was difficult to make out the faces of his companions at any distance. He had begun swinging up and down on the parallel bars, when another student, Mason by name, came up and began exercising at the other end. This boy had lately come to the school, and was of a surly, disagreeable temper. He and Charley had passed many a bitter word, and Mason, who was slow to forgive, was anxious, as boys say, "to have it out." Unconscious that any one was behind him, Charley

made a long jump backward, alighting on the muscles of his arm. In doing so, he gave Mason a sharp kick upon the shin.

“ You done that a-purpose,” sputtered out Mason, with more force than grammar. “ I’ll teach you something,” saying which he advanced upon Charley and dealt him a sharp blow in the face. In a moment, Charley, his countenance flushed with anger, rushed at his opponent, caught him by the throat, and was about to inflict summary vengeance, when the memory of Our Lord struck by the servant flashed before him. Almost involuntarily he released his grasp, and immediately his released aggressor began an impromptu war-dance about his person, inviting him to “ come on.” By this time quite a number of boys had gathered around, and were not a little surprised to find Charley, the pluckiest boy in the school, defied by a mere “ newcomer.”

“ Mason,” said Charley, mastering himself with an effort, “ I kicked you by accident; I didn’t mean it. Will that satisfy you? ”

“ Then you don’t want to fight? ”

“ No; I’ll not fight now, nor at any other time.”

“ Then just let me tell you this—you’re a low coward.”

“ Go for him, Charley,” whispered a pugilistic youth; “ you can get away with him easily.”

Charley’s lips trembled. To be called a coward, and in public! But grace was strong in him, and, in a voice trembling with agitation, he answered: “ In good time, Mason, I hope you will find that I am not a coward.” Saying this he walked away, and hastened to the chapel. Here, in the dim light which the lamp of the sanctuary cast, he prayed long and fervently. Tears of bitterness rushed from his eyes; for his struggle had been no ordinary one. But the Heart that beat so lovingly in the tabernacle went out to him; a holy peace took possession of his soul, and he felt, at length, that joy of the heart which not all the riches of the world can give or take.

In the meantime there was great excitement in the yard. Knots of boys were scattered here and there, reviewing the situation. Some of the smaller students dubbed Adams a coward. Others were unable to account for his conduct. But those who had seen him at the instruction of the morning fully understood and appre-

ciated his position. Norton, the oldest of the students, on seeing Charley come out of the chapel advanced and shook him warmly by the hand.

“ Good for you, old fellow ! ” he said. “ If some of the boys call you a coward, don't mind. You showed more heroism to-day in withholding your arm, than ever you did in using it. ”

The next day Charley had to put up with an amount of disagreeable innuendoes. But he bore them bravely. Mason, the while, went around among his “ set, ” and described in glowing terms how he had “ taken down that Adams. ”

That night there was a hard frost. On the following morning the ice was thick and the president of the college kindly gave the boys a holiday for skating. About three miles from the school-building there are several large ponds connected together, and called by common consent “ The Lakes. ” Thither the boys repaired early in the morning, every one carrying a basket containing his dinner. The general rendezvous was established at the lake nearest the college ; but many skated to the farthest, which was about a mile higher up.

After dinner, Charley, who was an excellent

skater, resolved to make a tour of discovery. The air was cool and bracing, and he set out alone at the top of his speed. He soon arrived at the farthest lake, and, finding the ice there much smoother than any he had yet found, he spent some hours on the glassy surface. The time seemed to keep speed with himself, so that on taking out his watch he found that the hour for returning to college had already expired. He was just starting to regain his companions, when he thought he heard a smothered cry as of some one in distress. He turned round quickly and halloed with all his strength. Listening intently, he seemed to hear a still fainter cry borne upon the cold air. He made for the spot, which was near a thick grove of trees on the farthest bank. Arriving there, he spied a small creek thoroughly frozen. He again shouted, and his doubts were cleared by hearing a feeble call for help, which seemed to proceed from some one farther up the creek. "It must be one of the boys in trouble," he thought, and immediately he glided along the crystal surface. On turning a bend, he perceived a boy lying flat on the bank, apparently helpless.

"Halloa! What's the trouble?" he exclaimed. The reclining figure partly rose and

revealed the face of George Mason. A deep flush of shame tinged Mason's cheek as he saw his injured schoolmate at his side. Charley, breathing a prayer of thanks to the Sacred Heart that he now had an opportunity of returning good for evil, smiled kindly, and said: "What's the trouble, George?"

That word "George" was a speech in itself. Hitherto Charley had known him as Mason, and the poor fellow felt the sweetness of a kind word thrilling him.

"O Charley!" he cried, "I am so glad that you have come! I sprained my ankle, and had just strength enough to get off the ice and throw myself on the cold ground. I have been lying here for two hours and am almost frozen."

"Poor fellow!" said Charley, in a tone of such feeling that George never forgot it; "I'll build a fire immediately and when you are well warmed up, we'll start for home. In the meantime you must wrap yourself well. I am warm and don't need my overcoat." Saying this, he took it off.

"Oh, don't, Charley," said George; "you are too good to me. So kind to me!"

"Yes, but I will, George. I'm your doctor now, and you must obey." And Charley, with

the tender hand of a mother, gently wrapped up the poor, benumbed boy in his coat. "Now for a fire!" And suiting the action to the word, he quickly gathered some dead leaves and dry fagots. George gazed at him with intense shame, wonder, and gratitude, and, as Charley applied a match to the leaves, began to sob convulsively. "Why, what's the matter, George? Are you in pain?"

"O Charley, I have been so unkind to you! Will you forgive me?"

"With all my heart, George. I have forgiven you long ago. You have, instead of hurting me, done me a great benefit."

"How so?" asked George, as our young disciple of the Sacred Heart kindly drew him nearer the fire. Charley related, in a few simple words, why he had refused to fight. George listened with growing astonishment and admiration. "Ah!" he exclaimed at the conclusion, "you were the hero; I have been brought up among rude boys, and"—here his voice faltered—"I never knew what it was to have a mother."

It was now Charley's turn to be astonished. Never had a mother! Oh, what depths of sorrow are in these words! "What should I have

been!" thought Charley; and his heart warmed towards the poor orphan.

An hour passed on, then thoroughly warmed, George essayed to walk; but it was a difficult task. His former enemy, now his fast friend, was obliged to support him on one side. In this manner they slowly made their way, in the gathering darkness, towards the college. And what a change had come over George! The rough, rude boy had become a simple, heartfelt penitent. And the change was permanent. A few days later George and Charley were known as Damon and Pythias.

A Batch of Letters.

WHEN Tommie R. rushed into the sanctum of *The Delta*, a college paper lately established at St. Maure's College, there was an air of excitement about him which prompted the entire staff to ask him in a breath what ailed him. But he gave them no time.

"It's a shame," he burst out, "and I won't stand it."

"Sit down," suggested the chief.

"Not in this office," continued Tommie. "You fellows are a lot of thieves."

The exchange editor blushed and placed a guilty hand over his bulging outside coat pocket.

"You're the man," vociferated Tommie, shaking his finger at the exchange editor. "I got it out of the fellow in the small yard who writes the 'Waste Basket' stuff."

"Betrayed!" murmured the business manager gloomily.

"I'll have the whole *Delta* staff arrested for robbing the mail."

“ Robbing the female,” corrected the chief. “ Only it happens that those letters were freely given to one of us by your mother.”

“ And you intend publishing them in your old *Delta*?”

“ We do.”

“ Then you stop my subscription,” said Tommie, folding his arms.

The staff was not so taken aback as he had counted on. No one moved except the business manager, who took down the subscription-book from the shelf above his desk. Then Tommie unfolded his arms and continued:

“ I’d rather die than see those letters of mine in cold print.”

Some of the associate editors here manifested signs of emotion. The youngest of them buried his face in his handkerchief.

“ Tommie,” said the business manager, “ suppose we have a little talk outside.”

They retired, held a few minutes’ consultation, then reappeared radiant.

“ He began by repeating that he’d die before he’d sanction the printing of his letters,” said the business manager, “ but he ended by accepting a two-dollar order on the candy-store.”

“ Don’t make yourself sick, little boy,” said

the chief severely, as Tommie received a written order for two dollars' worth of merchandise, "good only at the candy-store."

"Aw!" retorted Tommie. "I won't get sick on the candy; but if I hear any more of your second-hand jokes, like the ones you got off on me just now, I will."

And with this parting shot Tommie departed.

And now for the letters:

LETTER I.

ST. MAURE'S COLLEGE, Sept. 5, '95.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas R.:

MY DEER PARENTS.—I got here to-day at two, and i want to go home again. It is a gale, and i am prisoner. I wish i was dead. I cannot live here. Send me tickets to Get home. If you do, i'll be a modle boy. I'll go to bed when you say so, and I'll get up as soon as ma calls. I think i shall dye, if i stay hear longer. The boys here are horrid. If i die, pleas Bury me at home. I hear that the cercus is going to be in St. Louis next weak. Coodn't i start by Saturday? That would bring me Home on Sunday. I am desperit. I feel like Killing some one. I'll bet my brother Charlie is not feeding my Kennary bird right. Pleas send tickets right off.

Your beloved sun,

TOMMIE R.

LETTER II.

ST. MAURE'S, KAS., Sept. 6, '95.

My Deer Parents: I sent you a letter last night. Why don't you anser? Hurry up and take me away. Last night i slept in a Dormertinning. It's a place where there is nothing but Beds. How can a fellow Sleep with a hundred boys around him? It is an out rag. I coodn't sleep there at all. Just a little after i got into bed the prefect came along and wolke me up out of a Sound sleep and told me not to sleep on my back, But on my side, so that i woodn't snore and disturb the other boys. I did so, but naturally i got my back up at such treatment. My Apetit is going. I feel just the way I did before I had scarlet fever last year and nearly dyed. My money is all gone. I did not waist it, either. I spent most of It on Karamels, which are good and healthy. Send me some more money.

This morning at breckfust a boy was very rude to me. When I got done eating I did the way I used to do at home. I stretched my arms and threw my hed back and had a good yawn. While I was in the middle of it, a fellow beside me caught my mouth and tried to Keep it open. I managed to shut it, and when I asked him what he Ment, he said he wanted to see how i was made inside.

Wasn't he rude? I would have licked him, only i saw that he was stronger than me. All

the boys here are Like him. Your little sun will be very rude when he comes home. Pleas send tickets and money right away.

Your beloved sun,

TOMMIE R.

P. S.—A big prefect has just scolded me for talking in the study hall. Send me my tickets and Money *by telegraf*, or i'll do *sunthin' desperit*.

LETTER III.

ST. MAURE'S, KAS., Sept. 7, '95.

My Deer Parents: My hart is breaking. I have been studying Latin for an hour, and it is awful. To-day in class the teacher read my first Composition, and he called me an awful name. He said I was *funetic*, and then he made fun of my spelling. I asked a boy in the poetry class what funetic meant, and he said it was a Learned way of calling me a Dodo. When are you going to send me tickets? Why don't you anser all my letters? I had a little fun to-day. I plaid a game of Ball against a brick wall. They call it hand ball, because you do it mostly with your hands; but i saw one fellow use his feat.

But to night i am loan Some. Tell sister Aimy that when i get home i'm going to be a good bruther to her. Just take me away from this gale and i'll be the best boy you ever saw. I am lone some, becos i love you all so much. I'll never Anser back agan. I'll do eggsackly what i'm told. If the tickets don't come to-

morrow, i shall *pon my wotch* and sell my Sunday close, and come home on a Frate.

Your beloved son,
TOMMIE R.

LETTER IV.

ST. MAURE'S, KAS., Sept. 8.
Friday Morning.

My Deer Parents: We had eggs for breckfust. I hate eggs. Last night i was so home-sick in bed. Before i fell asleep there was a *big tier* resting upon my cheek. That was becos i was thinking of you, my deer parents, and of Sister Aimy and Brother Charlie, and the baby, and my pet white mouse. O, it is dredful lying awake at nite when all is still. I can't stand another nite hear. If my tickets don't come to day i shall dye. I had an awful stummuk Ake this morning. The doctor said it was to much candy. The doctor is an idjet. It is my health that is breaking down.

When are you going to anser my letters, and when are you going to send on tickets?

Your beloved sun,
TOMMIE R.

LETTER V.

Friday Night.

My Deer Parents: You need not send on those tickets until nex Wensday. I belong to a base ball nine hear now, and Play short stop. To day we plaid a game against a nuther team

our size, and we *taut* them a lesson. I made three put outs and too assists without a Nerror. I also stole second baste twice. I also made a base-hit, and the captain of our nine said i was a Bird.

The boys hear call me Webster, cos on account of my spelling. Do you know of a man named Webster? We are going to play a nuther match game nex Chewsday. That's the reason i'm not in a hurry for those tickets.

But then i must go. I don't think I should like to spend a hole year in this gale.

Your beloved sun,

TOMMIE R.

LETTER VI.

ST. MAURE'S, KAS.

Sunday Morning.

My Deer Parents: Last night i went to cun-feshun, and this morning i went to communion. I have a scrupel. Some of the things I said in my letters were *exagerashuns*. This place is not a gale, but it is strikt. The boys are not all Mene, but some of them are. The teachers are not all mene either. When i said i expected to dye i told a lye. Pardon me, my deer parents, for these faults; I have confessed them.

I think i should like to go home. Give my love to the baby, and to Aimy and Charlie.

I got your letter and was awful glad to get the dollar bill.

I have a chum now; his name is Willie Jones. I have also a lot of other frends.

Your beloved sun,

TOMMIE R.

P. S.—I can wait two weeks for those tickets. We have four match games on hand.

LETTER VII.

ST. MAURE'S, Sept. 25, 1895.

My Dear Parents: The president of this college has just hauled me over the coals for not writing to you. He says you have written to him to know whether I was sick.

Sick! I guess not. I catch behind the bat now. I haven't time to write. When I'm not studying I'm having fun. This is a jolly place. What are you talking about sending me tickets for? I don't want to go home. It is just the way I said. I always *new* I should like this place. It was *you*, my dear parents, that was croaking.

Maybe I growled a little in my *first* letter, but I didn't growl near as much as you make out. Tell my brother he can have my pigeons and my white mouse. I dont have time to miss you much, or I would. The boy who says St. Maure's is a jail is a snitch. After this I shall write you every month. We have not lost a game yet. I am studying hard, and now when I write I use a dictionery, and get a boy in a higher class to help me correct my speling.

That is the reason you will find no spelling faults in this letter.

I intend to stay here till I graduate. We are going to play another match game to-morrow. •
Good-bye.

Your beloved son,
TOMMIE R.

A Very Unpopular Boy.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH JOHN QUINLIVAN GETS INTO TROUBLE
WITH HIS PROFESSOR.

“COLLECT the themes,” announced the professor of Latin class, as he took his seat after the opening prayers. He was facing some forty odd boys, varying in age from ten to fifteen years. They were a bright, cheerful, and in general neatly dressed body of lads, and, taking them all in all, wore that indescribable air of youthful good-nature and ordered sprightliness which to the practised eye indicates the best understanding between master and pupil.

The “collecting of themes” involved almost necessarily some disorder. Many set to work unstrapping their books and fluttering over the leaves in quest of the day’s theme; others, fewer in number, instituted a search in their various pockets; others, again, of the more methodical

at once produced their tasks, and proceeded to smooth them out, eliciting the peculiar crinkling noise which distinguishes the unfolding of foolscap. All this confusion was accentuated by the movements of four bright, active little lads—each representing one of the four rows of desks—who bustled about, hurriedly snatching the papers from those who had them at hand, and urging on with loud-whispered importunity the laggards.

At length the papers were all gathered in, and placed upon the professor's desk. To a disinterested spectator it would have been an agreeable study to watch the master's face as he took up theme after theme, and glanced at each much as an art-lover might survey a painting. I do not say it was an agreeable study to the boys directly concerned: to some of them, indeed, it was; to all of them it was at least interesting. Evidently interesting, too; for every eye was fixed on Mr. Frank with an earnestness plainly evincing that the owner was striving to read, if not "the day's disaster," at least the verdict as expressed on the teacher's telltale countenance.

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that during the inspection of the first fourteen or fifteen themes Mr. Frank's face was wreathed

in smiles, while words, as it were, of honey dropped from his lips. The subject of these good words endeavored to look unconcerned, but he was an astute boy who could listen to Mr. Frank's honest and measured meed of praise without flushing with gratification.

But others yet remained to be noticed. The eyes of some were bright and steady with hope, those of a few were flickering like a neglected and spent taper. One boy, seated somewhat back from the middle of the room, his half-averted face resting on his hand, was looking drearily at his boots.

As Mr. Frank took up the sixteenth theme his face settled.

"Look at this, boys." He held up at full length an exercise smeared and blotted.

The class as one man caught its breath—somebody was "in for it."

There was a pause—an awful pause.

"This is too bad," he resumed, indignantly. "Quinlivan!"

The boy who had been eying his sorry boots raised his head.

"Come here, sir!"

Quinlivan arose and advanced in an awkward, shambling way to Mr. Frank's desk. He was

poorly and untidily dressed. His long legs, ungainly in themselves, were made yet more ungainly by his short, ill-fitting trousers ("high-waters," the boys dubbed them), which were sadly frayed at the extremities. A melancholy faded, blue necktie, dotted with ink-marks, but half-concealed a shabby checked shirt. His jacket of a dead color was patched here and there, undue prominence being given to the patches at each elbow. Nor did his face offset his dilapidated wardrobe and his lank, angular build. It was a face of the hangdog order. His slightly freckled cheeks were somewhat hollow—certainly in nowise chubby. His mouth was large, his chin retreating, and his eyes, dull and restless, had a stealthy trick of glancing askance, which certainly told against him. He rarely looked one straight in the face; when he did, his glance bore an air of effrontery. His expression it would be difficult to analyze. It was not sad, nor was it cheerful, nor could it be styled placid. Some would say that his look was one of half-smirking complacency; others would pronounce it dogged. Mr. Frank had set him down as a character three parts obstinacy and one part bitterness.

"Well, Quinlivan, here's another unfinished

exercise; and what you have done is so poor that it is not worth the wretched paper it's written on. *I can't read it: can you?* ”

Quinlivan threw a stealthy look at the teacher, then lowered his eyes, and smiled.

His conduct in the eyes of the class and master was anything but propitiatory. With an effort Mr. Frank mastered his temper, which was fast rising.

“ Haven't I told you, John Quinlivan, and every boy in this class, again and again, since the beginning of the school year, that whenever you fail to finish your theme you should give me your excuse in private before handing it in? ”

John Quinlivan smiled weakly.

“ Will you please answer me? ”

“ Yes, sir. ”

“ Very good. Have you any excuse? ”

“ No, sir. ”

Mr. Frank was mortified. It was but one month since the opening of school. In this short time he had labored with all the earnestness of an enthusiast at bringing his class into working order; and he had been quite successful. In addition to infusing a spirit of study and piety into his pupils, he had taught them to adopt habits of tidiness and order. He was a young

teacher—it was his third year at the work—but in his dealings with boys he was a model tactician. Yet in his otherwise smooth path there stood one stumbling-block. Day after day brought no change upon Quinlivan. Privately and in public, time and again, had Mr. Frank spoken to him. He had employed kindness, persuasion, severity—all to no effect. The boy seemed to be grooved in obstinacy. And so Mr. Frank had gradually come to the conclusion that the shabby, shambling student was a difficult subject indeed.

“ Take this exercise to the Prefect of Studies,” said Mr. Frank sternly; “ I’ve spoken to you enough on this matter.”

Quinlivan, with his weak smile, left the room. He returned presently, handed his teacher a note, and took his seat, his facial expression unchanged.

The note read:

“ Have spoken to John Q. Hope he will do better, but must confess can get nothing definite from him. If he do not improve, send him again.”

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH JOHN QUINLIVAN GETS INTO TROUBLE
WITH HIS CLASSMATES.

JOHN QUINLIVAN rarely indulged with his fellows in play. During the recesses he was generally to be found seated in a retired corner of the playground, whittling a stick or indulging in a broken conversation with some chance companion.

During the recess immediately following his introduction to the reader he was at his usual place alone. But he was not fated to enjoy his solitude long. He noticed that several of his classmates were bunched together, holding an informal consultation; and though they were standing beyond earshot, he divined from their gestures and stray glances that he was the subject of their remarks.

“He’s smart enough,” Ed Ronald was saying. “Sometimes I’ve seen him get up a lesson while Mr. Frank was asking the fellows in front of him.”

“Of course, he’s as smart as any of us,” added little Joe Hornung, a very small boy

with a highly intellectual face. "Why, one morning when he got here in time for the half-hour's study before Mass, he wrote out a very nice Latin theme; and Mr. Frank praised him for it, too. It had only one mistake. Mine had none. His was second best."

"Ah—I guess he's lazy," put in John Mullen, with an expression of disdain upon his thin but animated face.

"He *looks* like a hard case," said Frank Trainer critically, "and he acts like one, too. He's downright impertinent to Mr. Frank. If I were in Mr. Frank's place I—I'd kick him."

"He's the only boy in our class that doesn't act nicely towards the teacher," said Jimmie Keeler, who had just succeeded in pinning a tail to Charlie Gating's coat and was trying to appear unconscious of the comic effect. "I think, boys, we ought to bring him to time."

"At least we might give him some kind of a hint," suggested Ed Ronald. "When a boy gets a nice teacher he ought to appreciate him."

"Suppose you speak to him, Ed," said Frank Trainer. "You're the best talker."

"And besides, you're the biggest," put in little Joe.

The suggestion seemed to meet with the ap-

probation of the entire caucus. After some demur, Ed finally accepted the commission, and walked over to Quinlivan.

“ See here, John,” he said, kindly, “ why don’t you try to get on with our teacher? ”

“ He doesn’t like me,” John made answer, slowly and after due reflection.

“ I don’t know about that. But why should he like you? ”

Quinlivan picked up a stick and began whittling.

“ I don’t know. I haven’t done anything against him. The boys don’t like me either.”

“ That’s your own fault. It’s your—well, your stand-offishness that sets them against you. You never play with them and don’t seem to trust them. And besides, you are mean to Mr. Frank.”

Quinlivan opened his mouth as if to speak, but seemed in the very act to change his mind. He brought his lips together again, looked at his stick, and fell into what is called a “ brown study.” Ed’s eyes in the meantime, beaming with friendly earnestness, were upon him.

“ What were you going to say, John? ”

Again John hesitated; but finally in a low, subdued tone, he said:

“ They don’t like me because I’m poor.”

“ Now that’s too much,” cried Ed, hotly. “ You’re a goose! I’m as poor as a church mouse myself, and have all the trouble in the world to dress neatly, and the boys know I’ve hardly ever a cent to my name; and yet they’re all nice to me—just as nice as if I were a millionaire.”

Ed was really angry. He had no idea what it was to harbor an unworthy suspicion. Noble himself, he judged the ordinary actions of his playmates from his own high standard. But, after all, he was an inexperienced boy, and could make little allowance for those who viewed matters from a less lofty standpoint. In his estimation Quinlivan’s remark was mean and shabby in the extreme.

“ You’d better try to do what the teacher says,” he added harshly, as he brushed away.

Quinlivan smiled, but said nothing.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH JOHN QUINLIVAN WINS A LITTLE SYMPATHY
FROM A LITTLE FRIEND.

TWO weeks passed on, and for several days John Quinlivan had not appeared at school.

But just as the boys were beginning to miss him "from his accustomed place," he again entered the class-room one morning, everything about him, from his faded-blue necktie, patched jacket, and sorry boots to his freckled face, jaunty air, and weak smile, unchanged.

It came out during the day that his father had died. In spite of their growing dislike for him the boys showed in various pretty, quiet ways their sympathy. But he ignored all covert overtures.

Little Joe, however, the "child of the class"—he was an *enfant terrible* in asking the professor knotty questions—was not to be balked.

He approached Quinlivan at recess, and held out his tiny hand.

"What do you want?" asked Quinlivan, as he awkwardly caught the tips of Joe's fingers.

"I'm sorry for you, John," said Joe frankly.

"You needn't bother: I'm all right." And John released his sympathizer's hand.

"Don't you feel very bad?" asked Joe, looking into Quinlivan's face with some perplexity.

"I don't know."

"My papa is dead, and my mamma too,"

said Joe gently. "They died when I was a baby."

Quinlivan raised his head and gazed at Joe's pitying face earnestly. As he gazed the tears started to his eyes. He arose hastily, caught Joe's hand, pressed it, and hurried away.

"He's not so bad after all," thought little Joe.

But as the weeks went on, Quinlivan's ways held their former tenor. Long-continued arrears in his tasks brought him to lower depths of disgrace; and when Joe would remark to his classmates, "I'm sure he's not *all* bad," he stood alone in his opinion.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH MR. FRANK PAYS JOHN QUINLIVAN A VISIT, AND LEARNS A FEW THINGS NOT INCLUDED IN THE USUAL CURRICULUM OF STUDIES.

EARLY in the winter Quinlivan was again missed from class. After a week's absence Mr. Frank called Ronald.

"Ed, do you know the city pretty well?"

"I think I do," answered Ed modestly.

"Then I wish you would do me a favor.

Look up Quinlivan's place, and let me know. It's out towards the river in St. Prosper's parish, but the exact address, through some oversight, is not down on our register."

"I'll find it, sir. And," pursued Ed with a smile, "if it takes me much time, you won't mind my missing to-morrow's theme, will you?"

"Good-evening, Ed," laughed the teacher.

Next morning Ed returned with Quinlivan's address, and stated that the boy's mother was in a dying condition.

Mr. Frank started.

"Oh, the poor boy!" he ejaculated; "what a life he has been leading this year! God has deprived him of his father, and is now taking his mother—and all this time I have scarcely given him a kind word!"

That evening, when class had finished, Mr. Frank, after half an hour's walk, made his way through a foul alley to the address Ed had given him. He found himself before a large, ugly tenement-house. In the gutter beside it some wretched little children were at play. One of them, a little girl in tatters, approached him and gazed upon him with undisguised interest.

"Well, little girl, could you tell me where Mrs. Quinlivan lives in this house?"

“ She’s dying, sir.”

“ Indeed. Could you show me her room? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

The girl preceded him, pattering up a flight of stairs, and along a porch which served the common convenience of all the lodgers on the second floor, the doors of their respective rooms—some twenty in number—opening out upon it. Walking nearly the full length of this porch, the little girl stopped, and, pointing to one of the doors, said, “ That’s it, sir,” and tripped away.

Mr. Frank knocked.

No answer from within.

He knocked again, and strained his ears to catch the least sound.

He could catch no intimation to enter, but he heard what he fancied to be the sobbing and wailing of one in unrestrained grief.

He again knocked, and receiving no answer boldly pushed the door open.

The room, bare of all furniture, save a table, two chairs, a picture of the Mother of Sorrows, a bed, and a cooking-stove, with the most necessary utensils, presented a touching scene.

Kreeling beside the bed, John Quinlivan was weeping without restraint, his cheek resting

tenderly beside the hollow, hectic-flushed cheek of his dying mother.

“ John,” said Mr. Frank gently.

John sprang to his feet, dashed the tear-drops from his eyes, and stood looking—was it in wonder, fright, pleasure, or a combination of these emotions?—at the unexpected visitor.

“ Is it your teacher, John?” came a feeble voice from the bed.

“ Yes, mother.”

John’s grief, seemingly at least, was now entirely subdued. He wore, it might be said, the ghost of his habitual expression.

“ Thank God!” the mother exclaimed. “ Mr. Frank, next to the priest of God, whom I have seen, I wished to see you. I wanted John to ask you to call on me; but he feared to ask you, and I didn’t insist. John is so bashful.”

Mr. Frank started. John bashful? That was a new factor to be taken into consideration in summing up John’s character.

“ My poor friend,” he said, approaching the bedside and taking the mother’s outstretched hand, “ God knows I would have come before had I known you were so sick. How long have you been in bed?”

“ Almost entirely the last two months and a

half; indeed, since the second week of John's going to school."

"And who has been caring for you?"

"My darling John. Oh, Mr. Frank, God has blessed me in my child. He has been so good to me! Night after night has he been by my side. Didn't he ever tell you, when he used to come late to class, how he was up with me till late in the night?"

"He has never even told me you were sick."

"Poor boy! You must excuse him for his awkward reserve, Mr. Frank. Till last summer he was under his father's care almost entirely. He was thrown among bad characters, and treated harshly by all, even by his father, whom may God forgive. His father and I were separated, through no fault of mine, for five years—since John was eight. No wonder, then, that my John, after such years of misery, should be suspicious and reserved. But if you knew him as I do, Mr. Frank, you would love him."

Mr. Frank was listening to a revelation. Tears sprang to his eyes, and he begged God to forgive him for the wrong he had done—unwittingly, he hoped—to a noble boy.

"John," he said in a husky voice, "come here."

The boy obeyed.

“ John, in the presence of your mother whom you love, in her name, for her sake, will you forgive me? Oh, I have wronged you so bitterly!”

John caught the teacher's hand, and as he grasped it, burst into a flood of weeping.

“ It was my fault,” he cried, “ it was—it was. But I couldn't help it, sir. I couldn't talk to you nor any one. I was afraid.”

The teacher kept the boy's hand, and pressed it warmly.

How his views had changed in a few seconds! John an obstinate boy! He was one of God's noble souls. Brought up by a wretched, besotted father, his sensitive spirit had been chilled and frozen under contempt, neglect; and all manner of ill-usage, till he feared acquaintance and stranger alike—till the confiding simplicity of the child had been hardened and shaped into an unlovely and suspicious reserve. John negligent in his studies! He had been mastering a child's noblest study—a mother's needs. John untidy! Oh, there was the neat bed, the ordered room, beautiful in its poverty, and the gentle-faced dying mother to give that accusation the lie.

For a long time did Mr. Frank hold converse with the mother. For years had she labored and saved to lay by some money for her child. At the price of her life—poor, fond mother—she had amassed a few hundred dollars, and with a part of this money had she induced the drunkard father to forego his claim upon the boy.

“ But,” she continued with a faint sigh of resignation, “ I have been obliged to spend most of it on myself. Here,” she added, producing a warm pocket-book, “ are ninety-three dollars left. Will you, Mr. Frank, take them in charge for my boy? ”

“ John,” said Mr. Frank, “ can you trust me after all that has passed? ”

“ I do trust you, sir; indeed I do,” sobbed the boy.

“ Then I shall take this money. And more: I have wronged you sadly, John. With God’s help I shall repair that wrong. Mrs. Quinlivan, I solemnly promise you that as far as in me lies, I shall see to your boy’s getting a college education. I have no money myself, but I have a friend whose purse has long been at my disposal for any worthy cause. I never knew what a

blessing his long-offered help might prove. Thank God I can carry out the plan which God in His providence is taking from your charge."

The mother's face became thrice beautiful in its tranquil happiness.

Before night had fairly settled, a nurse appeared in Mrs. Quinlivan's chamber; and later there came to the house an express wagon with all manner of pleasant things to soften the last hours of the invalid. Mr. Frank had seen his friend at once; and the friend had not been slow to make good his promises.

For the first time in several months John Quinlivan slumbered the night through without interruption.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH JOHN QUINLIVAN MAKES HIS BOW UNDER
HAPPIER AUSPICES.

MR. FRANK, on the following morning, made a very impressive address to his class. He spoke on rash judgment. After denouncing those who were offenders in this species of fault, he capped the climax by announcing himself as an offender. Then in a clear narrative he went over the school career of John Quinlivan, their

absent schoolmate, and explained its new meaning in the light of the deathbed scene.

“Boys,” he concluded, “I tried to be just, but I must have been hasty. I have learned a lesson I shall never forget; and from this out I shall be a better teacher. For the best teacher is he who interprets aright the conduct of his pupils, and takes each according to his character.”

How the boys did applaud that slim, neatly dressed, quiet boy, John Quinlivan, when not many weeks later he received the class prize for excellence in the Latin theme.

A year has passed. He is still stiff and reserved, but growing less so day by day. All the boys are particularly kind to him; and whenever he seems harsh and unsociable, they remember the long thorny path of wretchedness which John once trod in silent bravery, and they return his seeming coldness with winning and unaffected love.

My Strange Friend.

I.

A FEW days after Christmas, I was sitting in my room, nursing an incipient cold, and wondering when my health would permit me to return to the seminary. At this period of my life I was heir to many ills, prominent among which was the dyspepsia. Headache in the morning from eight to ten, headache in the afternoon from two till about four, headache at night from seven indefinitely, then bed;—this constituted my daily order, dull enough surely in the reading, but painfully dismal in the realization.

The cessation of my morning headache was almost due, when my sister, singing gayly, tripped into my room with a letter, which she handed me with a mock bow.

“I am very much obliged to you, my dear, for bringing me this letter,” I remarked; “but now really couldn’t you dispense with your feminine war-whoop when you’re in my room?”

“Oh, you great, big, dyspeptic bear,” she laughed out, “you want me to take pattern after yourself, and go about like an unsuccessful undertaker?”

I felt my gorge rising at her remark, and was tempted to say something ungracious and bitter, as she danced out through the doorway. That’s the way with us dyspeptics: we have no sympathy for sweet human life, and are especially high with our near relatives.

Without stopping, however, to analyze my feelings, I tore open the letter and read:

FAIRMOUNT GROVE, *Jan. 12, 1874.*

MR. THOMAS MAXON:

Dear old Tom, I can never forgive myself the language I used previous to our parting. What a pity that supper ever came off at all. But I am now so heartily ashamed and penitent that I know you will forgive and forget. And now you can do me a great, a very great service, and I feel positive that you will not refuse me. I have heard that you are unwell. Come out here in the pure country air and spend a month with me. It will surely do you good, while beyond all doubt it will serve me untold gain. O my dear, dear friend (for I trust that you have already forgiven me, and are my friend again), come and see me. I have changed greatly, and am very miserable. The strange darkness that has come over

my life, I may not, cannot tell. Some terrible power imposes silence upon me, though I would give worlds to confide it to you, dear Tom. But come, come; let yourself be the answer to this note. Ever your loving friend,

WILBER STONE.

I read this letter with mingled sentiments of pleasure and of pain: pleasure, that it reconciled me with the dearest friend of my boyhood; pain, that, judging by the tenor of his communication, a terrible, saddening change had come upon him.

Wilber Stone and myself had been chums at college. Beginning together, we had gone on from class to class, dividing (let me say in all modesty) the honors between us. While studying Rhetoric, a prize was offered for the best essay on Longfellow. We were both admirers of the poet, and set to work at the task with ardor. The day before the essays were to be handed in, Wilber, on invitation, came to my house to see my paper. He read it carefully, praising what pleased him, and, like a true friend, frankly pointing out what he considered its defects.

“ Well, Wilber,” I said when he had finished, “ suppose you let me see your own essay.”

“Willingly,” he answered, and took from his coat a bundle of manuscript.

I read it eagerly.

“It’s no use my handing in,” I remarked, when I had come to the end of it. “Your essay will certainly take first place; no boy in the class can come near it.”

“You think it better than your own?”

“Better!” I exclaimed warmly. “Why, Wilber, I couldn’t write like that in a year’s time. Yes, Wilber, my boy, I’m beaten squarely.”

A strange look came over his face. But, instead of continuing the conversation, he caught up his hat, bade me good-evening, and abruptly left the house.

A month later the gold medal was awarded.

“The prize for the best essay on Longfellow is awarded to——” Here the vice-president of the college paused to clear his throat. I was sitting next to Wilber, and patted him on the back.

“Get ready to go up, old boy,” I whispered.

Wilber’s face was strangely pale; and so nervous had he grown that he was unable to return my smile.

“Is awarded,” the vice-president continued, “to Thomas Maxon.”

This was one of the greatest surprises of my school life. Amidst hearty applause, I found myself—how I got there I know not—on the stage, receiving from the hands of the president the gold medal. But I was far from being satisfied.

“Wilber,” I said, when I had regained my seat, “this is a mistake.”

“Next in merit,” continued the vice-president, now that the applause had subsided, “George Murray and Francis Elaine.”

“What!” I gasped. “Why, you’re not even mentioned. I’m going to ask our professor about this just as soon as this affair is over.”

“No, no, Tom,” whispered Wilber, more nervous than before; “you mustn’t do any such thing. You have honestly earned the medal.”

I attributed his nervousness and his words to bitter disappointment.

“But I will,” I answered hotly, for I was burning with indignation at what I could not but consider a cruel mistake.

My dear friend spent some time in persuading

me not to make any inquiries in the matter; but he was unsuccessful.

“Mr. Warden,” I said, touching my cap to my professor as we met outside the exhibition hall, “how is it that Wilber got no mention for his essay on Longfellow? I read it, and felt sure that his was far superior to mine.”

“The reason is simple,” answered Mr. Warden. “Wilber neglected to hand in his essay.”

Then the truth flashed upon me. I turned away with the tears standing in my eyes. The medal was now indeed valuable to me; it was the sacred memorial of a heroic act of friendship.

But poor Wilber, noble as he was, had grave faults. He exhibited two traits which made me tremble for his future. One was an ungovernable pride; the other, an outgrowth of the first, an unwillingness to take advice. He went through life “at his own sweet will.”

The latter defect came into prominence during our year of philosophy. He grew captious about revealed truth, sneered at the classic answers to philosophical and theological difficulties, and occasionally gave voice to opinions which shocked me. Despite my protestations, and the warning of some of the professors who

took a deep interest in him, he chose as a friend a fellow-student whose standing, both as to class and to character, was at the lowest. Insensibly there arose a coolness between us; not that we ceased to be friends, but that our plans and pursuits had become so widely divergent.

On the night of Commencement exercises we philosophers, having finished our course, sat down to a parting banquet before separating in the great world.

The first hour passed pleasantly enough, though I noticed with uneasiness that Wilber was drinking freely. By and by the talk turned upon the valedictory which I had delivered.

“The allusion to Our Lord you brought in,” said one, “was very beautiful, and, at the same time, came in so naturally.”

Wilber gave a scornful laugh,—such a laugh that conversation came to a stop, and all eyes turned upon him.

Then, flushed with wine, he spoke such words of Our Saviour as I have not the heart to record.

Every one present was aghast at the blasphemous language; many looked at me. They knew that I was shortly to enter a seminary, and seemed by common consent to place me in the position of spokesman.

“Wilber,” I said, rising,—and the pain I felt at that moment I shall never forget,—“I cannot stay in your company if you choose to speak such language.”

“Free country, young Levite,” cried Wilber, his face hardening with pride. “We’re not in the class-room now, Deacon, and I’ll say just what I please.”

Then he went on to utter further blasphemy. With a heavy heart I left the room whilst he was still speaking, followed by all except Wilber and his evil genius, the classmate against whom he had been so vainly warned. On the following day Wilber departed for the East with his family; and though one year and a half had gone by from the time of that unhappy banquet, I had not seen him since.

On reading his letter I decided to comply with his request at once, and accordingly I arrived at the depot near Fairmount Grove that afternoon at three o’clock.

What was my dismay when I saw awaiting me at the depot not the gay, handsome, athletic Wilber of college days, but a sad, gaunt, hollow-eyed young man, so changed in appearance that I could hardly bring myself to believe it was the same person.

As he caught my eyes his face lighted up with pleasure.

“O Tom, Tom! how glad—how very glad I am to see you!”

I rushed forward to give him a hearty handshake, but he drew back with an air of timidity ill-befitting the bold Wilber of former days. Recovering himself by an evident effort, he took my hand in his. He held it for a moment in a cold, pressureless grasp, and then drew back as though he had done a guilty deed.

“Your hand is cold,” he said nervously.

I looked at him closely, but the welcome on his face belied his actions. I was puzzled.

“You find something strange about me, Tom,” he said in reply to my look, “but if you only knew all. Don’t think that you are not most welcome. Here, jump in,” he added, motioning to a sleigh that I knew to be his.

As we jingled along to Fairmount Grove we fell into an earnest talk about old times, in the course of which, however, through motives of delicacy, I avoided bringing in a single allusion to matters of religion, fearing that perhaps it might awaken unpleasant memories.

“So you are studying for the priesthood?” he resumed after a short lull in our conversation.

“Yes, Wilber; and I hope to give my whole life to the service of God.”

What was my astonishment when, at the mention of the sacred name, he released one hand from its hold upon the reins, and lifted his hat with an air of devotion that was a sermon in itself.

“Ah, Wilber,” I cried in delight, “I knew it would end so; I knew that you would come back to the old way of looking at things.”

He turned his face towards mine, and with a frightened, wistful expression in his eyes, asked:

“Tom, what does our divine Lord say about the scandalizing of little ones?”

“It were better that a millstone were placed about the scandalizer’s neck, and that he were cast into the depth of the sea.”

“Just so,” he responded with a sigh, and an expression that was pitiful, “and yet He is such a good, such a merciful God, too.”

“Indeed He is,” I answered. “We can none of us begin to understand how tenderly God loves us.”

“Say that again,” he said softly, while a smile warmed his face into melancholy beauty.

I repeated my words, and continued to talk in the same strain, as I saw what evident pleasure

the subject afforded him. When I had come to a pause, he added:

“And yet He is so terrible in His denunciations of those who scandalize His little ones.”

“Yes,” I made reply, “but there is forgiveness for them if they repent. But cheer up, Wilber; what makes you so sad?”

“I have many reasons, Tom. Just one month ago mother died.”

“Indeed!—your mother dead? O Wilber! why didn’t you let me know? It must have been an awful blow to you.”

“But that’s not the worst, Tom. I knew for a month before that some one very dear to me was going to die.”

I was again amazed.

“How in the world did you know that?”

“I can’t tell, Tom, but listen”—his voice sank to a whisper—“what day of the month is this?”

“The fourteenth of January.”

“Very well, on the twentieth of January—” here he paused while the lines upon his face indicated some terrible agony—“on the twentieth of January—O my God!—some one else dear to me will die.”

The groan which accompanied his ejaculation

sent a shiver through me; I began to fear that I was in the company of a madman. But he read my thoughts as though I had framed them in words.

“No, no; it is no hallucination; I am not out of my senses,” he exclaimed; “nor can I now explain to you how I know such things; but what I say is true.”

I made no reply, and my silence might have been awkward were it not for the fact that at this juncture we turned into the winding roadway which leads up to the spacious country house of Fairmount Grove. Standing at the gate was a bevy of boys and girls from the tot of three to the hoiden of fifteen, smiling and waving hats and handkerchiefs at my delighted self. I remembered them all—the “tigers” was my name for them—and, if signals of welcome go for anything, they remembered me.

“Hurrah!” cried Charlie, the oldest lad of the group, a cousin of Wilber’s, “here’s Uncle Tom come at last.”

Though I was in nowise related to any of Wilber’s cousins, they had insisted on calling me Uncle Tom from the first time that I showed myself to their delighted eyes in the full dress of young manhood.

No sooner had the horse come to a stop before the gate than all the tigers, with the exceptions of the two older ones, sprang upon me with a series of joyful screams and friendly struggles, pulled me from my seat and out of the vehicle, and cast me down into a deep bank of snow, the more astute of them in the meantime emptying my overcoat pockets of various small packages, which, little rogues, they knew I would not fail to bring by way of a peace-offering.

We had a merry time of it on that winter afternoon, the tigers pulling me this way and that, forcing me to play the elephant, exhausting my entire stock of fairy tales, then clamoring for more, and, in fine, exacting of their Uncle Tom ample amends for his long absence. It was great fun for them, and, I may add without apology, for myself, too; for I love little children, and sincerely pity the man who does not.

Throughout this round of amusement Wilber had contented himself with being merely an on-looker. He witnessed our rompings and tumblings with a strange, sad, timorous, yet pleased expression, and whenever he spoke to the children, it was in so sweet a voice, in so gentle a

manner, that one would think he was addressing himself to superior beings. As we were going up the stairway at bedtime, I made a remark to that effect.

“You are right, Tom,” he answered; “I do regard them as superior beings; for they are, God be thanked for it, pure and innocent, and whenever I am in their company I cannot help bearing in mind that their guardian angels ever see the face of their Father who is in heaven.”

Once more was I impressed with the thrilling, awe-inspiring reverence of his voice and expression. It was such a change in Wilber, who of all my school companions and friends had ever been the least reverent.

“Here,” he continued, throwing open a door, “this is your room. It is next to mine.”

“Good,” I said; “if I feel at all wakeful, which is not at all likely after the events of this day, I will give you a call.”

With an air of secrecy he closed the door, and said to me in a tone of voice which was little more than a whisper:

“Tom, my friend, if I should happen to come in here during the night at any time, you wouldn't mind it, would you?”

“Certainly not, Wilber: you shall be most

welcome," I replied, though I must confess that I could not control a motion of astonishment.

"Thank you very much. And, Tom, if you note anything strange or out of the way in my conduct in case I come in, you must try not to mind. I should like to—to tell you all, if I dared; but I really cannot—at least, not yet. Perhaps the time will soon come."

"But at any rate, tell me this, Wilber: is not your health seriously affected? You look far from being a well man. You are very thin, and worn, and are excessively nervous."

"I can't tell—I can't speak out," he made answer in a voice that had become loud and hoarse. Then he caught at his throat as though he were choking, and resumed in a lower key: "*It* is wearing me away. Doctors have examined me, and have all been obliged to give it up; and no wonder. But good-night, Tom. Suppose we shake hands: you are warm now."

He shook my hand with almost an excess of cordiality, and then quietly departed, leaving me to wonder and surmise far into the night.

I had not long been asleep, so far as I could judge, when an uneasy sensation to the effect that something or some one was in the room began to trouble my slumbers. After a few

struggles I succeeded in awaking sufficiently to realize that a man was in the room. I sat up fully awake, and discovered by the pale light of the moon shining full through my window that Wilber, his face distorted by terror, was beside me.

“Come closer, Wilber,” I said, endeavoring, despite an uncanny feeling, to put a note of cordial welcome into my voice.

“Oh, I am so glad that you are awake,” he whispered. “Let me be near you. Let me take your hand. There, now, my dear friend, lie down again and try to go to sleep. Don’t talk. You need your rest. All I ask is to be near you.”

I ventured to make a few remarks, but he begged me to compose myself to sleep.

He sat beside me on the bed, meanwhile, holding my hand, his large, lustrous eyes distended with fright. Occasionally, in a tone so low and indistinct that I rather apprehended than heard what he said, he muttered, “On the twentieth of January, one that is near and dear to me will die.”

It is needless to say that I slept little. At the first break of day he stole away quietly.

The following night witnessed a repetition of

the same incident, whereupon I suggested to Wilber that he should make my room his own—a suggestion which he accepted with alacrity. His bed was removed to my room, and we were thus brought almost constantly together. From that time, and until January the nineteenth, all went well. Then came the twentieth of January.

“Tom,” he said, on that memorable night as we entered our room, “may I ask a particular favor of you?”

“Certainly, Wilber; I shall be only too glad to do you any favor in my power.”

“Thank you, Tom. Please, then, stay up with me to-night; for I know that I shall not be able to sleep.”

“With pleasure, Wilber; but how shall we pass the time?”

“Tell me something about God’s mercy, Tom; I love to hear you speak on that topic.”

Fortunately, just previous to my visit, I had read and pondered over Father Florentine Boudreaux’s excellent work entitled “God, Our Father,” and so I could speak with some fluency on this beautiful subject. Wilber listened to me with an interest which was intense, although at times strange fits of trembling came upon him.

“But, Wilber,” I said when one of these paroxysms had passed, “do you really entertain any doubts of God’s mercy?”

“No, no,” he exclaimed earnestly, throwing out his hands with vehemence. “Not a man living, I dare say, has more reason to have faith in His goodness than I; and the very secret which is consuming me teaches me how very, very good He is.”

“But if the secret is injuring you so much, why not tell it to—”

I stopped short; for an expression so unearthly and awe-inspiring had come over his face, that it would be useless to attempt its description. To this day that expression haunts me. As it came upon him, he sprang from his chair, and with bated breath appeared to be listening. A moment passed; another and another, amidst a dead silence made horrible by the ticking of the great hall-clock; then, with a sob he sank back upon his chair, and bending low his head, buried his face in his hands.

“Dead! dead!” he groaned.

“Who?” I faltered, wiping my brow, for I too was possessed by fear. The clock sounded eleven, as he answered:

“Ah! I shall know soon enough.”

The remaining hours of the night passed slowly; but from that moment Wilber became more composed. At the first gray dash of dawn upon the blackness of the eastern horizon he fell into a heavy sleep, and, taking advantage of this, I threw myself upon my bed and was soon unconscious.

I had not slept beyond two hours when I was awakened by some one pulling at my sleeve. It was Charlie, Wilber's cousin, to whom I have already referred. His eyes were wet with tears.

"Hello!" I exclaimed, "what's the matter, Charlie?"

"Papa's dead," said Charlie, beginning to cry afresh. "He died at our house in town last night, and I shall never see him again."

II.

Charlie's father had been Wilber's best beloved uncle. Yet the bitterness of loss fell more easily upon my friend than the vague presentiment of it, and from that time he began to rest more quietly. I flattered myself, therefore, that the worst was over, and that Wilber's troubles had already touched their highest mark.

About eleven o'clock, on the night of Feb-

ruary the fourth, however, I was aroused by some one clutching my arm. Looking up, I saw Wilber in such an agony as God grant I may never again witness upon the face of any human being. His eyes, protruding from his head, gleamed with a strange light, his limbs were quivering and so unsteady that he swayed from side to side, while his face was moist and beaded with perspiration.

“Wilber, Wilber! what ails you?” I cried.

“O my God!” he murmured.

There was no need for me to question further. I saw it all now. Another warning had come, and together we were to face the tortures of thirty nights of presentiment.

Like a drowning man he clung to my arm, and held it hour for hour, shivering and praying till the glad dawn broke.

The days that followed were indeed gloomy. Wilber appeared to be unequal to this fresh trial, and every hour seemed to set its seal of decay upon him. In two weeks' time he was hardly able to go about. His doctor, a man high in the profession, said that the case was baffling in every respect.

But strange to say, as Wilber's physical faculties grew weaker his will and mind gathered

strength. His gloomy fits became rarer, and he began to sleep quite soundly. In lieu of the weariness and unrest that formerly possessed his features, there came gradually a look of deep calm and abiding peace. Towards the end of February he was obliged to keep to his bed.

On March the third he called me to his side, and begged to be allowed to speak to me alone.

All left the room, and I seated myself upon his bed.

“Tom,” he began, “you know what is going to happen soon. Some one near to me is going to die.”

I bowed my head.

“Do you know who it is?”

“No, Wilber.”

“But I do,” he answered with a certain triumph in his manner. “It’s myself; and I am so happy, Tom, for I know who it is that will judge me.”

He pointed to a picture of the Sacred Heart on the wall.

“That most loving Heart is the Heart of my judge.”

Ah! how beautiful he looked, as his face softened with love and hope.

“I’m afraid, Wilber, that you are right. God

is about to take you away. But I am glad, indeed I am, that you are in such peace.”

“Before I do anything else, Tom, I want to tell you of that awful mystery—for I feel at last that I can talk of it. When you become a priest of God it may be of service to you. Ah, Tom, sometimes I think that I might have become a priest if I hadn’t gone wrong. Then I’d have done some good, but now here I am a wreck. It’s too late. ‘Too late, too late, you cannot enter now.’”

His voice trembled as he quoted Tennyson’s exquisite paraphrase.

“You remember,” he went on, “my conduct on graduation night? Well, I carried on in that way, blaspheming God and His saints, but always careful to keep such words and sentiments from my relations. When mother and I returned from our trip East, things went on smoothly till last Christmas a year ago. During the holidays all my little cousins and nephews and nieces—your tigers, you know—came here for a visit, and for a few days we were a merry party. Shortly after New Year’s day I wanted to go to town to hear a certain lecturer who made fun of religion for one dollar a head. Somehow my father came to hear of my pur-

pose. He called me to his room, gave me a severe scolding, and ordered me not to leave home for a month. He was furious; but before he had said much—you know my pride, Tom—I was furious too, and there were high words between us. On returning to my room I found a letter on my desk with news of the sudden death of one of my new friends. You know the kind of a friend that means, Tom, but I really had liked him very much.

“The dinner hour then found me in a most unhappy frame of mind. After some attempts to compose myself, I strode into the dining-hall, where father, mother, and all those little children were already seated, and without looking at any one I threw myself into a chair.

“‘Wilber,’ said my father, ‘you forget your grace.’

“‘No, I don’t. Bah! as if there were anything to be thankful for.’

“O Tom! you should have seen how pale and puzzled and frightened those little children became. And my dear mother! When I think of the sad look that came upon her sweet face, and see her put her trembling hand to her heart, I can hardly keep from weeping. And yet, brute that I was, I didn’t soften in the least;

no, not even when her trembling hand rested upon her cheek, and her dear eyes filled with tears. My father could not speak.

“Poor mother was dazed; I could see it. She could not credit her ears; with an effort she mastered herself and spoke.

“‘Come, my dear boy,’ she said in her gentlest tones, ‘you are not yourself. God has been ever good to us; there is nothing we can ask for that He has not given us.’

“‘Indeed!’ I exclaimed in the brutality of pride, ‘there are a good many things He doesn’t give us, seeing He’s such a good God.’ Tom, I should have stopped there, at least. For again my mother’s hand went to her heart, her lips quivered, and all the happiness of her life left her face; but—God forgive me—I went on and added: ‘Why, for instance, can’t I know beforehand when my friends are going to die?’

“‘O Wilber!’ and the words sounded as though they came from a broken heart, ‘that I should live to see this day;’ and my mother buried her head in her hands.

“I see it again, those little children, their innocent faces fixed in horror, my mother bent in grief, my father utterly at a loss what step to take. There I sat gazing haughtily upon all,

when suddenly I sprang to my feet and would have fled, but that I was rooted to the spot. There was a cold, clammy grip upon my shoulder. I turned, but there was no one behind me and still that cold, chilling pressure as of an icy hand moved slowly along my arm, till it caught my hand with a strength that I cannot describe, for it was not the strength of physical force, and words stop short of beginning to describe it. Then my hand, released of that awful grip, dropped powerless to my side, while in my ears I heard the sound as of a death-rattle. I gazed wildly about the room, and saw that all were looking at me in utter consternation.

“ I attempted to cry out, but it was impossible for me to utter a sound. At length the rattle ceased; the spell was broken, and I rushed from the hall, and sought refuge in my own room. For hours I paced up and down in the most terrible mental suffering; then, at random, I picked up a book, which chanced to be a collection of autographs, and opened it at these words:

“ ‘ I shall love thee, even after the cold hand of death hath touched thee.’

“ I threw the book aside with my first sense

of terror revived. An hour later I took up another book. This time it was the Bible. Perhaps you may guess what I read:

“ ‘But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.’

“ One month from that day, another of my former friends died. Then I knew what that strange occurrence meant. God had heard my wish, to punish and correct me. Three months later, the same dreadful feeling—and a month later my mother died. Tom, I had hastened her death; I had broken her heart.

“ You know the rest, Tom; but you cannot see, as I do, how merciful God has been to me. Oh, He is indeed a good God, and what seems His severest chastisements are often His tenderest mercies.”

Late the next evening all the little ones gathered about the bed of the dying man. In faltering accents he told them enough of his secret to repair, as far as could be, the dreadful scandal; and the sobs of his listeners were the only interruption.

“ Wilber, my boy,” said his father, “ as you

yourself say, God has been indeed most merciful to you."

"Yes, father, and I have often thought that, aside from my mother's prayers, He did it to reward me for the one heroic act of my life. It was heroic for me when, through love for Tom here and to humble my pride, I gave up my chance for that Longfellow prize."

A few moments later the hand of death had lost its power over him forever.

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