Our Boys and Girls.

THE MOTHER'S STRIKE.

BY ELIZABETH H. THOMAS.

Such a dream I had! So dreadful
That I never heard the like;
For I dreamt that on a sudden
The mammas agreed to strike.

"We are tired," I heard them murmur,
"Tired of working night and day,
And not always hearing 'Thank you!'
Such long hours and such poor yay."

So they would not mend the jackets
Nor the holes in stockings small;
No one ran to kiss the bruises
When poor Tommy caught a fall.

No one bound up wounded fingers,
No one glued the broken toys;
No one answered all the questions
Of the eager little boys.

No one tied the little bonnets,
No one brushed the little curls;
No one basted dolly's dresses
For the busy little girls.

No one heard their little troubles,
No one held them on her lap;
No one sewed on truant buttons,
No one hunted Johnny's cap.

And there were no bedtime stories,
And no loving hands to tuck
Blankets soft round little sleepers,
For their mothers had all struck.

O, so lonesome and so dreadful
And so queer it all did seem!
Aren't you glad, dear little children,
It was nothing but a dream?

—*Youth's Companion.*

BOY'S BACKWARD LESSON.

BY EMMA F. BUSH.

The family were at breakfast table when Roy Edwards came downstairs. He slid into his place between Dick and little Dorris, with a scowl on his face. As he drew the chair up to the table, he managed, by a quick turn of his body, to kick Dick and hurt Dorris with his elbow at the same time.

"Roy," said the father quietly, "Is that the way we have taught you to say 'Good morning?' Let me see how well you can behave."

Roy whimpered. "I am behaving," he whined.

"Not very well, my boy," said his father. "Now sit up to the table and eat your breakfast."

"I want coffee," said Roy.

"No," said mama. "It isn't good for you."

Roy scowled still harder. "I don't want any old breakfast food. I want toast, and egg, and coffee," he muttered.

"No," replied his father. "No coffee anyway; and you must eat your saucer of breakfast food before you have egg or toast."

Roy's elbow gane an angry jerk, and knocked the spoon out of Dorris' hand to the floor. Another quick jerk, and her saucer of breakfast food followed, covering her dress with a sticky, milky stream before the saucer reached the floor, broken. Dorris burst into tears, mama rushed to rescue the dress, and sister Ruth picked up the broken china and wiped up the floor.

"Roy, you had better leave the table, I think," said Mr. Edwards.

"I wasn't doing anything at all," cried Roy, shoving his chair back against the wall as hard as he could, and stamping over the floor toward the sitting-room.

Mama sighed. "Another day when he got out of bed backward," she said. "It is worse and worse all the time."

There was a crash from the next room, and Ruth and Dick rushed to see what was the trouble.

"Roy has broken Dorris' best doll," cried Dick.

"I didn't," screamed Roy. "I only sat her up on the mantel-shelf and she fell off and broke herself."

"That will do," said his father. "You have done mischief enough for one morning. Go upstairs to your room, Roy, and stay there until lunch time."

Roy walked sulkily up the stairs and slammed the door of his room.

They were all just as mean as they could be. A boy never could have any fun. Somebody always stopped it. Dorris was a cry-baby, papa always unjust, and mama—here Roy stopped, for the sorrowful look he had seen in mama's eyes made him feel ashamed. Well, he couldn't help it. Dick was always teasing him and making him feel ugly. It wasn't his fault things went wrong.

All at once he stopped grumbling, for right in front of him stood the queerest creature.

"A fairy," whispered Roy. "I didn't think there were any, really. But what a queer fairy."

The queer little mite balanced himself in front of Roy, and, as he danced before him, grew larger and larger, until he was as large as Roy himself.

Although he was facing Roy, his toes turned in the opposite direction, while part of his body turned to one side. He was dressed in a long, loose robe, something like the boys in his picture-book, who lived far away, and seemed to be all twisted, too. Even as Roy looked, he seemed to turn around and twist the other way, but as he looked again, he was facing him as before.

"Do you do how," remarked the stranger politely.

Roy started. "Who are you?" he asked.

"Backward bed of out got who boy the," answered the stranger. As Roy still seemed puzzled, he took him by the arm, turned him around once and a half, then gave him a shake, leaving Roy facing away from him, but still seeing him in the glass, at the same time repeating his remark.

"Oh," cried Roy. "I know what you say now. The boy who got out of bed backward."

"Yes," said the visitor sadly, and Roy could see in the glass the tears running up his cheeks to his eyes, "the first one."

"Is there more than one?" asked Roy.

"Heaps," answered the visitor, "heaps and heaps. More and more coming all the time. Look at me! I get more and more twisted every day."

"Have you been that way long?" asked Roy.

"About four thousand years," answered the boy.

"Four thousand years," repeated Roy. "Why, you don't look any older than I am."

"That's part of it," answered the stranger.

"Part of what?" asked Roy.

"My punishment," his visitor replied.

"You see it's the way," he said, seeing Roy look at him pityingly, "I thought it fun at first, and I kept on getting out backward every day. When you once begin it's much easier than the other way.

"I lived in a tent in the Great Desert, and people came from all around to see me. From all over the Desert they came on camels and horses. You see no one had ever behaved so before. Every one wondered what ailed me. At last, one day, I struck a horse which wasn't really a horse at all, but was a Desert fairy. She laid this spell on me, and I began to grow backward and twisted, as you see me now. Not until there is a day when no child in the whole world follows the example I set for them can I be free."

"And that has never happened," said Roy slowly.

"No, and never will, I am afraid," said the boy.

"But," he added, "I have a chance of release. If for thirteen times thirteen days one boy gets out of bed backward, I can be free, and he takes my place. I have been watching you with a great deal of interest lately, for you have only a few more days. See, you are growing quite crooked already."

He waved his hand toward the glass, and Roy saw his head slowly turn toward his back, his feet turn around, and felt his whole body twisting out of shape.

Frightened, he opened his mouth to scream, but no sound came. He grasped at the boy who stood beside him, but felt him slip from his grasp. At the same minute he felt himself whirled around for a second, then gently placed on the floor.

He looked for the boy, but he was gone, just the faintest little echo of a voice repeated, "Remember, it's thirteen times thirteen."

When the lunch bell rang a few minutes later, Roy took his place quietly, and all through the meal sat very quiet and thoughtful.

"What makes my boy so quiet?" asked mama.

"I saw the Backward Boy," Roy answered, and I will never get out of bed backward again."

"I guess it was a dream," laughed mama. "I looked in your room twice this morning, and you were fast asleep. After lunch you shall tell us all about it, and if the Backward Boy only gives me back my sunny Roy once more, I shall not be sorry you met him in the "Land of Dreams."—*S. S. Times.*

INDIA'S HONORED ELEPHANTS.

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