

THE BOY'S COMPANIONS.

"Where is John?" Father, who had just returned from his day's work, made this inquiry concerning his five-year-old son.

"I thought he was out in front, watching for you," mother replied.

"I did not see him."

"He must have gone down the street, then. I cannot keep track of him any more. He is off every chance he gets."

"He'll be back in a few minutes," father remarked indifferently.

Why be concerned about the child's absence? There was no danger. The street was a quiet suburban one, with no cars and few vehicles.

No danger? Ah, but John is more than physical body. He is mind and soul as well.

John returned just as father said he would. He had been in a neighbor's house, and there was no harm done.

No harm? Then why did John hurry so with his supper, and leave the house so quickly when the meal was ended?

Ah, well, the neighbors liked him. Of course, they did. Who could help it? His absence had its advantages also, for father had time to read the afternoon paper, and mother to do her evening work.

"Where is John?"

Five years later, father asks the same question.

"I think he went down to Anderson's," mother replied.

"Why does he go there so much?"

"The boys have built a cabin in Anderson's yard."

"Which boys?"

"O, the Andersons and the Griffiths and Will Hamer and Sam Van Leer and a few more."

Boys from the best families in the neighborhood. No cause for alarm here.

But come, father, and see that cabin. Come quickly, for the moments are precious. This is it. Open the door. Whew! What an odour of stale tobacco smoke! Do not hesitate on the threshold, for your boy is part owner here.

What is that small box behind the rafter? Ah, cigarettes. And these papers, father; what are these? Dime novels. And this little book with no title on its yellow cover, which is pushed away back beneath the other papers; what is this?

Quick, father! Have you a match? Burn them—the booklets, the papers, the cigarettes, the shanty—all of them!

But stop a bit. The nicotine poisoning, the lies, the false conceptions of heroic manliness, the evil stories, the impure thoughts, the corrupt practices! Can you burn these things out of your boy and leave him unscarred? Can you gather them together in one hideous mass of corruption, and so utterly destroy them that he will know them no more forever?

Can you? Say, father, if you can do this, come with the speed of the lightning's flash and the glory of the morning's light, to show us other fathers how to do it.

"Where is John?"

The same inquiry is made when another five years is past.

"He went down to the creek," mother

answered.

"Why does he go down there so much?"

"They have a boat and a boathouse."

"Who?"

"The Anderson and the Griffith boys, and Will Hamer and Sam Van Leer."

There came old crowd—bols from the best families in the neighborhood. But, mother, did John forget to tell you that a few more boys had joined that company—Jack Quinn, whose father keeps the notorious saloon; Mike Donnelly, son of a low-bred politician; and more of that type? No matter. Perhaps they are not so very different from your boy, after all.

"But this is Sabbath," father suddenly remembers.

"Doesn't he go to Sabbath School any more?"

"He hasn't been there for several weeks."

"Why?"

"I suppose he thinks he has grown too big."

Go after the boy, father. To the boathouse? Yes, or to any other place he may be this Sabbath afternoon. Do not go in anger, with stern reproach, or arbitrary command, but go with loving pity and sympathy to bring him back. And wherever he goes, be his companion. Let his interest be your interest. Learn his ambitions. If he has none, create some.

Another five years pass, and there comes the same old query: "Where is John?"

"I do not know," mother replies. "He never tells me now."

Ah, the pathos of it! But try as you will, sweet mother lips, you cannot utter the sob that is in the heart. It seems but yesterday those same lips sang the baby John to sleep, while the heart built magnificent castles—virtue, love, achievement. They seemed so sure, so strong, those castles; but now they are blown over with the breath of these few words: "He never tells me now!"

"Where is John?" You have asked that question many times in the past, father; and you were satisfied when mother answered. You will ask that question many times in the future; but there will be no answer.

Long after the lips have ceased to repeat the query, your heart and soul will reiterate it, for in your innermost being will be the bitterness of a fearful disappointment. How gladly would you then recall the days when the little fellow romped through the house, while you complained of his noise or shunned his society! Because you spurned his companionship then, you will one day yearn for a fellowship you cannot win.—In Mother's Magazine.

If you are willing to choose the darkness of faith instead of the illumination of reason, wonderful light will break out upon you from the Word of God.—A. J. Gordon.

"Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."—Sel.

HOLINESS NEEDED

Every clearly justified soul needs to press forward into holiness. The limitations of his present experience, however wonderful it may be, and the hunger within, predicate the need of holiness. The defects in the clearest experience of regeneration are summed up by Bishop Foster as follows:

I note that dissatisfaction of the soul with itself is a common experience of all regenerate souls, varying from intense distress at times to mild regret. Its experiences are not satisfactory. It has a prevailing consciousness of inexcusable defects. It does not reach its ideal. It feels the chiding of the Holy Spirit. It lashes itself with reprovings. It often carries an unhealed wound because of its unfaithfulness or failure to be what it feels it ought to be. There is the abiding consciousness that here is something better for it. When it is upheld and sustained in an average experience, and others think well of it, and there is no external failure visible to other eyes, it discerns inward poverties which grieve and distress it. It would love more, be more patient, more brave, more trusting, more cheerful, stronger, more robust; it would work more and do more and be more. There are holy yearnings in it after something higher and nobler. There is often a distressing sense of remaining evil in it. I think I am safe in saying this is universal experience, subsequent to the experience of regeneration. This has been called in our theologizing and in the theologizing of all the Christian schools, "the remains of the carnal mind," "untracted roots of inbred sin," "the spirit of the flesh," "natural corruption," "seeds of depravity," "the old man," and by various other semi-Scriptural names. These phrases all point to a fact, but not unfrequently a sensuous meaning is attached to them which leads wide apart from the truth which they aim to represent. They are supposed to represent some sediment or infusion in the soul or in the body, which must be washed out. What is meant and what is true is this: when the soul is forgiven and its affections are turned to righteousness, so that it passes from under the dominion of evil, impulses and inclination to evil are not completely eradicated. They still arise and assert themselves. They assail and disturb the peace of the soul. They have a constant tendency to prevail with it. They find support in its old habits and in its native lusts—that is, desires and cravings.

THEN I SHALL KNOW.

When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glaring sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own,
When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

—McCheyne.