ORIGINAL ENGLISH

AS WRITTEN BY

OUR LITTLE ONES AT SCHOOL.

BY

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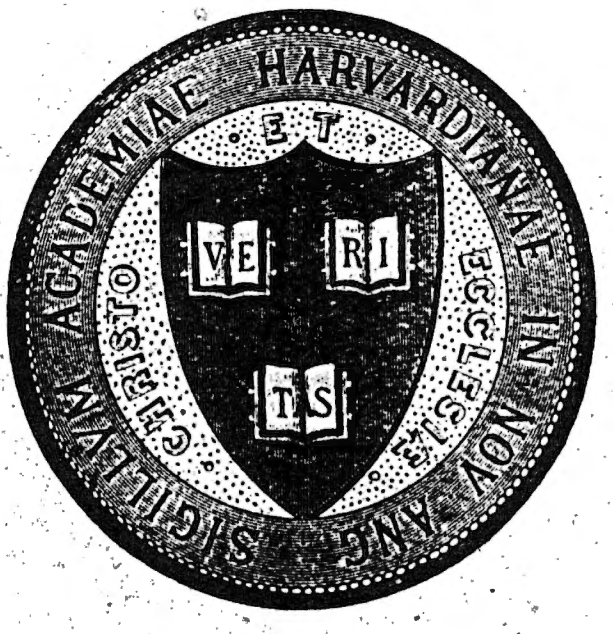

PREFACE.

JUST one word before I draw the curtain, reader. I beg to state that—apart from the fact that a few of the pieces were sent to "Longman's Magazine"—this work is absolutely fresh and original.

The portions which appeared in "Longman's," under the title of "Studies of Elementary School Life," at once caught the attention of editors of the daily and weekly Press, and were received, I am informed, with an almost unprecedented greeting wherever that excellent magazine was read.

I can only hope that, in this complete form, "ORIGINAL ENGLISH" will be accepted with equal relish, and that it will prove brimful of amusement, whilst at the same time showing how the children regard the pageant of life.

And now, without more ado, away to the Schoolroom with

Yours faithfully,

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

5, *Shakespeare Villas,*
Cottenham Park, S.W.

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ORIGINAL ENGLISH.

CHAPTER I.

THE reader may well surmise that a schoolmaster's daily routine is a somewhat humdrum one. And, in the main, such is the fact; but still there are flashes of colour that light up from time to time the school-room's sombre horizon; and it is this bright side of the picture that I am now about to display.

That "Boys *will* be boys" as regards mischief, all parents know to be true, quite as well as any schoolmaster can tell them; but that "Boys *will* be boys" when compelled to take part in the intellectual gymnasium, parents do not know, perhaps, quite as well as the schoolmaster.

Again, there is this difference betwixt the two exhibitions of boyishness:—in the first instance it is intentional on the lad's part; whilst, in the second, it is altogether sweetly innocent.

Indeed, it is in this *naïve imperception* of distortion, in conjunction with an utter *abandonment* to the matter in hand, that the whole humour of school-boyishness lies. For example, "What is the feminine of *hero?*" I ask a second-class (ages ten to twelve) during an afternoon grammar lesson.

There are very many hands thrust out at once, but I cannot refrain from satisfying the eagerness of one poor little fellow right behind there, who, in his desire to catch my eye, is standing on tip-toe, with hair almost erect, glistening eyes, and cheeks flushed and distended with excitement. "Well," I say to him, "you tell me, Harry Walker." "*Shero*, Sir!" shouts the little fellow, his eyes sparkling with pleasure and pride, whilst he is as certain in his own mind of being correct and of gaining my approving smile as he is assured there is a sun above him. Well, I, the schoolmaster, *do* smile;

but it is one of those peculiar smiles of mine, which I have heard my assistants term *ventral*.

But I must not be led into giving examples of my school diversions before I have finished my few remarks. All in good time, and you shall have plenty of them.

It is now many years ago since I determined to collect, preserve, and pigeon-hole such compositions as from time to time are produced by certain original youngsters; and I now put a period to my odd engagement, and let the public have the results of it.

Let me say, then, that the various pieces I shall place before you are such as come straight from the minds and hearts of *children*. I laughed myself (*ventrally*, of course,) when the youngsters so innocently committed themselves in the fashion these chapters will relate; and I doubt not that the young prodigies will provoke many a further titter from my readers, and will find an echo in thousands of hearts, old and young.

Let me thank my friends in the profession, or connected with it—inspectors, masters, and mistresses—for sending me their choicest diver-

sions. I insert some of these; but, in the main, I rely on the experiences of myself and my own pupils.

But now, friends, let me usher you at once into the schoolroom. There before you sit the merry, roguish little fellows (all warranted under fourteen), covertly poking fun at you directly you enter, making you feel very nervous and very old, and just a little bit annoyed and ruffled. But, never mind; *you* can "bear away the bell" before the little innocents this time, at any rate; for have you not come, escorted by the schoolmaster himself, with the specific intention of poking fun at *them?*

* * * * *

The first specimen I place before you shall be the composition exercise of a boy whom I recollect very well as a happy, cheery little fellow, although he came from a very poor home. He was one of a class of fifty, who, on this occasion, were being examined in Scripture knowledge.

After the oral examination, six questions were set to be answered on paper, and the lads could choose any four of them.

The second question of the series was, "Give an outline of the life of Samson."

The paper is dated [redacted] and I give the effusion word for word from the lad's own writing:—

"The life of Samson which I has to give. Samson was the wonderfullest man you ever seed. He was so mighty strong that he thought no more of Lions and Bears, than boys do of cats and things. If you think he was a giant, that's just where yer wrong, coz he wasn't a bit bigger than your father is. But mind yer, he had very long hair, and that's just where it was. It went right down his neck, and under his coat, and then all the way down. That's how it was.

"Samson became very sinfull, for he got a courtin a young woman who was a relation of the wickerd Phillistins. Men should never court young women from other countries, except they are good. Never mind abart them being nicet looking, if they are not good. Why, this young woman actshully wurshipped them ugly little imiges wot yev seed Misshinaries bring in bags, and put in a row on the table. As Samson was

goin a courtin one dark night, a Lion sprung at him from over a garding. And see yer, Samson just cote it by the chin, and gev it sich a crack betwixt its eyes, that it dropped down dead, like as yev seed cows behint butchers shops. You'll never know how strong he was.

"When they got marrid, behold Samson arskt a riddle, while the Phillistins was all eating their dinners round him. He told them that if they could guess it, he would give them without jokin 30 new suits of close apiece. Didnt they try after that; coz they knowd that if they found it out, they'd never have to buy no more new close. But they couldnt riddle it, with all their thinkin. Then that nasty imige woman went and told them wot it was. So Samson had to give all of them 30 new suits. How they wood larf while they was a carrying them home, speshully when they was trying them on. But Samson never forgived the imige woman, and he woodnt be marrid to her no longer.

"You woodnt think this strong man wood have gone and got marrid agen to anuther imige woman. Behold he did, and the next one was worser than the first. A reeal badun this one

was. Her name it was Deliler. Never mind her uther name, coz people never used to have two in those days; that's how it was. Deliler only pertended to love mighty Samson. But she just hated him at the bottom, coz of his tying them 300 foxes' tails together with straw, lightin them all up, and chivying them ever so all among the corn. Samson hadnt been marrid long, afore he began of them agin. He happened to pick up in the street an old jobone of an ass, and he went right at a whole army of them with it, and killed abart a thousand of them just as if they was flies. That's how it was.

"Deliler was allus a worrying Samson to tell her wot made him so mighty strong. He told her all sorts of things abart switches and ropes, but when she'd tied him with them, and cried 'Here they are a comin,' Samson just sprung up, and killed them right off as usuerl like flies. At last mighty Samson told her abart his long hairs. Then this bad imige woman got Samson nicetly off to sleep, and clipped all his hair off as short as yours, with a big pare of sizzers she'd got lent her. And then the nasty woman nudged him, and cried out a gigglin, 'Here they are a

comin.' But poor Samson couldn't do nothing this time; and when they bussled him away to a big dark prison with his hands tied behint him, he said it served him right for tellin wot he knowd. Poor Samson nearly cried. Then they put out both his eyes, and forced him to turn a big stone weel all day long. O that bad imige woman; that secund one, that was her.

"But I'll tell yer, them old Phillistins was punished at last, just when they thought as they was safe. Samson's hair began to grow agen down his back; and, as it got longer, he felt hisself gettin mighty strong. One arternoon abart 3,000 of them was eatin all sorts of nicet vittles and getting drunk in a big round room, and they kept taking turns at wurshipping imiges. Then they sent for poor blind Samson to come to them and dance and do strong things. When Samson got in he arskt the little boy wot held him, to lead him to where the two biggest pillers was. And the little boy did so, without thinking nothing at all abart it. Then Samson bowed his head down, and prayed to God just for a minit or two, and then he snatched fast hold of the pillers, and tugged away like mad.

And see yer, afore anybody could stop him, he tugged them two big pillers right down, and the top of the place came smashin in. Sich a smash it was, and it killed them all their, as easy as flies. Samson was killed too, but he didnt mind that."

CHAPTER II.

THE answers a schoolmaster gets from his pupils during grammar lessons are often so extremely ludicrous and so utterly devoid of pertinence, that it is not surprising that the intelligent public are asking the question "What is the use of teaching the bare rules of grammar to such a punctilious extent in our Government schools?" The question is a practical one; however, as these chapters are written, in the main, simply to amuse the general r[illegible] shall refrain from discussing the subject, and content myself with letting my tales speak for themselves.

A schoolmaster of a rural school got a remarkable masculine gender from one of his disciples. The village pedagogue was dealing assiduously with the grammatical distinctions of sex, and had got correctly from one lad that the masculine

of "Mrs." was "Mr.," and from another that the masculine of "lady" was "gentleman;" and then he asked a third little fellow for the masculine of "Madam." "Madam, Adam," glibly responded this village prodigy, little dreaming of the mental shock he was giving his master.

I find I have kept a record of a remarkable answer in grammar given by a little lad, Harry Sharman. He was a scholar whom I had the greatest difficulty in instructing, on account of his nerves being so sensitively strung. An effusion of his on "doctors," is now in my hand, and you shall have it after I have given his "slight mistake" in grammar.

I will first simply state that Harry was a very, very poor lad, and that he died of brain fever at the age of twelve years six months, the result of a fall, the district doctor said, but I have always thought that he was one of the little victims of educational overpressure.

Well, I was trying to instil into the boys the mysteries of the degrees of adjectives (regular and irregular), and, after giving the class numerous examples of comparatives and super-

latives, I concluded the lesson by a recapitulatory catechism. Amongst other questions, I asked for the superlative of the adjective "nice," and seeing Harry Sharman's hand instantly elevated, I called upon him for the answer. And what do you think was Harry's superlative of "nice?" Reader, it was "jam pudden!" The bump of association was evidently well developed in Harry, and, as with most children, the concrete was more attractive than the abstract.

And now I give you the essay written by Harry only two weeks before he sank into his grave. The end came very quickly; he was at school on the Thursday, and he died the following Thursday morning at nine o'clock, just as the school-bell was echoing through the streets, and summoning all the neighbouring little people to their daily tasks. The brazen bell might ring! ring! ring! but Harry's ear was dead—dead—, and Harry's soul was already beyond the stars.

In those sweet fields of Eden
Where the tree of life is blooming.

I should just premise that I had permitted the boys to write upon any topic they liked to

select for themselves, and Harry chose the extraordinary subject of "doctors." As I remarked above, association was very strong with Harry, and you will quite understand, reader, why the lad's nervous temperament should have led him to the choice of such a grim theme.

"*The Doctor.*—Being a doctor is a very good trade. Doctors have most always niced black wiskers at the side, and are tall men. They are also very fierce-looking, but they are very useful. Doctors are men who never walk, except from a carriage to a house door. Doctors are skinny men, with black eyes and coats. Doctors bring babies to good little boys' houses. I was very good, and he brought my mother ours. It is a little girl, and it is called Agnes. The doctor has seen me three times for the purpose, cuz I have headaches. My mother looks at me, and cries when he's gone. I never tells mother I have headaches, except it hurts me very much. I love my mother. I wish my head was same as other boyses. Yesday I arskt Webster if he ever felt dizzy, and he said no. All boys I ask says no. What the doctor gives me makes me feel worser. But mother likes me to take it, so

I don't mind. I wish I was a man, but I'd rather be a woman like mother. Doctors hav'nt niced houses. There is bottles all round and no washin. Doctors hav'nt loud voices like men you hears in the street, but their eyes are brighter. I am not so frightened of doctors as of perlice. When I'm in bed I can't sometimes go to sleep. I can say my money tables best in bed. I dreamed one night that the doctor came upstairs all in the dark, and took me out of bed, and gave me to a perlice to bury. But I woke up just afore he buried me, and my mother was akissin me and cryin. Mother says doctors can cure nearly all things, and that they are kind men. Headaches is not dangerous."

I shall now give a specimen of a rather different type, namely, the exercise of a boy in the seventh (or highest) standard of the school.

The subject under examination was *Animal Physiology*, in which the class had received ten months' instruction, a lesson having been given twice in each week.

On referring to my diary I find that the boy whose composition I transcribe, likewise came from a poverty-stricken home. His mother (the

lad was illegitimate), had to walk every day a distance of two miles from F——to H——, where she was employed in a factory or warehouse, and her earnings averaged eight shillings a week. The boy's school-fee was threepence, and the mother never once failed to send it, even when work was slack.

The question was, "Describe fully the Chordæ Tendineæ of the heart," and the following is the lad's literal answer:—

"The Chordæ Tendineæ are the cords, or, better still, the thin ropes of the human being's heart, which are like ordinary sailor's thick ropes, only the valves of the auricles stand for the ships, and the fleshy columns beneath for the anchor; while of course on the sea, on a sandbank most likely, the ship is the real ship itself, and the anchor the real anchor. However, some books written by some ancient writers say too much about these tendons, attaching far too much importance to them. We after always be careful that we don't fall into such ancient mistakes, as a lot of generations, that is, grandchildren and great grand-children, grown up when we have been dead a hundred years from

the present time, may smile at us, just as we do at them, and not buy our books we write.

"The Chordæ Tendineæ go slanting, not straight, as you might think."

The reader will notice that the lad's spelling is accurate throughout, the *after* for *have to* (a very common *lapsus calami* with children), being the only error in this direction. He also subjoins a pen-and-ink illustrative sketch, embellished with coloured pencil shading, and intituled "the Chordæ Tendineæ in action;" but I am bound to confess that the illustration might be very well taken to represent either a partly-sucked orange, or a dismantled sailing vessel.

CHAPTER III.

POOR JAMES ——! There is one of his exercises now lying before me. Jimmy was always an arrant dunce as regards reading and writing; but he was one of the quickest little fellows at accounts that I have ever had under my tuition. He could polish off with celerity and precision difficult problems, involving not only intricate reasoning, but which under ordinary circumstances, would have required an acquaintance with abstruse arithmetical methods.

His father tended a factory engine, earned good regular wages, and was what is termed a cute, jolly fellow. He could scrape the fiddle, and sing a good song at the neighbouring "Free-and-easy," besides having the additional qualification of being able to tom-tom easy accompaniments on the piano.

Thus the surroundings of little Jim were not of the most healthy nature, from a moral point of view.

I forget what became of Jimmy for the first three or four years after leaving school; but when he was about twenty years of age, he occupied the post of billiard-marker at the house where the above-mentioned "Free-and-easy" was held. And now comes the saddest part of my story.

The young man got connected with one of the flashy jades of the locality, and the woman prevailed upon him to marry her. The youth yielded; and, before he had been married a fortnight, the woman led him such a dance with her midnight orgies, that the husband realized too late—too late—the terrible mistake he had made.

Well, one evening Jim had just turned the gas of the billiard-room down low—after some customers had finished their game and departed—and, taking advantage of a few moments' quiet, he straightway signalled down the speaking-tube for his supper, which meal he always took at the little table by the marking-board. On this

occasion, one of the barmaids brought his bread and cheese and pickles up, and at the same time she took the opportunity of conveying to him some most horrible news of his wife's escapades on that evening. The girl finished her communication by saying, "And now, Jim, I told you that you were a simpleton for going to church with her, and now again I tell you that you're a simpleton if you don't settle both her and yourself this very night,"—or advice to that effect. Little did the barmaid think of the actual impression her words were having upon him; for, reader, James *went mad*, lost his reason, even whilst she was whispering to him, and before the night was over he was lodged in the nearest asylum.

The poor affrighted barmaid confessed the whole of the truth to the young man's parents the following day, and it was from the father's own lips that I subsequently became acquainted with the painful facts.

Jim is now located in the county asylum,—a palatial edifice, standing upon a proud eminence, and surrounded by nodding plantations and shaven lawns. One might well be pardoned

for mistaking its castellated facade, its soaring turrets, and its glinting ranges of mullioned windows, for some baronial seat.

About four months ago I visited the institution, and was courteously escorted by the doctor through the wards, and into poor Jim's presence. There he was—my quondam clever little mathematician—playing a game of billiards with one of the attendants. The grey metal-buttoned jacket and ugly nankeen trousers, which constituted the uniform of the inmates, served to quite annihilate his identity, for I should never have recognised him.

He immediately came up to me and asked me for a bit of tobacco; and when I introduced myself to him, my words appeared to convey no apposite meaning, for on my inquiring persuasively, "*Now* don't you know me, James?" he merely said, curtly, "That's nothing to do with tobacco; my question, Sir, simply required 'Yes' or 'No.'"

Well, I emptied my pouch of golden flake into his box, and then the doctor said to me, "Now, if you really want a treat, Sir, just play a hundred up at billiards with him. Excuse my

saying he is sure to beat you, for his all-round play is something marvellous. Besides, it will do the patient good; I often have a game with him myself." So I assented, though I am but an indifferent cueist.

The lunatic started by giving me a miss; then I failed to score off the red. The fellow then made a splendid break of 61, which included such grand all-round cannons that I watched them come off one after another with bewildered amazement. His estimation of angles and amount of *side* was almost as scientifically exact as if he were compelling his ball to traverse the grooves of occult geometrical figures. When the lunatic at last let me in, I scored fourteen, and received the congratulations of the doctor; then, from a difficult opening, my strange opponent went clean out with a quick, unfinished break.

Shortly after our game I bade the poor monomaniac good-day. I then requested the doctor to hasten with me along those dismal corridors and galleries towards the nearest exit, for I told him there was something peculiarly depressing to my spirits in the very atmosphere of the place. To see the poor wretches huddling in groups to

the right and left, and grinning either vacantly or spitefully at us as we passed, gave me the "shivers;" nay, I confess I began to feel a nasty, nervous *creepy* feeling getting the better of me. I almost fancied that my own mind was losing its balance, and I half suspected that the doctor was noticing me, and was already considerately planning a trap for my detention within the walls. This waking incubus (if I may be allowed the expression) was by no means alleviated when the doctor suddenly led the way down a cut-throat-looking passage, which dipped rapidly under ground. However, he laughingly explained that we were merely traversing a private subterranean communication between the main building and his own residence. This private under-ground passage had been constructed by order of the present committee to enable the doctor to pay frequent *surprise visits* to the various wards, and thus to pounce swiftly upon any act of secret brutality or other abuse on the part of the attendants. After a subterranean walk of a hundred yards, we emerged by a flight of steps and a trap-door into the doctor's private library.

However, I was in haste to depart; and, before a few more minutes had passed, I had shaken hands with him, and was lightly pacing it along the gravel path that led down the slope and through the meadows. I paused for a moment midway down the hill, turned round, and looked upon the lofty turrets just visible over the distant depths of elms, and I know not whether it were with sensations of pleasure or pain that I communed with myself and realized that *I* was, indeed, free and healthy both in mind and body, whilst poor Jim and his fifteen hundred fellow-inmates, whom I was leaving behind me on the hill, were cooped up in a mockery of a palace, with minds shackled or hopelessly overturned.

Turning back, reader, to Jimmy's life in the old school days, the exercise now on the top of the pile before me is the only memento I have. It is a composition upon "The Turkey," and I herewith place it before you just as the lad wrote it:—

"THE TURKEY.

"The Turkey is a large blew bird, genelly fat, with thick legs. It has no tail worth mentioning at the side of a cock's tail, but it has instead a

long piece of skin hanging from its head and under its chin just like red tripe. This skin is genelly dirty at the bottom because of draggling on the ground when the bird is a feeding.

"The Turkey is king of the goose and most other birds, but the eagle can fight it. It is like a very big cock if it wasnt for the tail. It is not cruel to kill a Turkey, if only you take it into the back yard, and use a sharp knife, and the Turkey is yours.

"The Turkey gives us nice Turkey to eat at Christmas, if you can afford. My father won a turkey at the public house where I goes for the beer. The landlord is a big heavy man, with a white fat face, and black hair, and he arskt me if I'd swallered all the Turkey. Then the dirty men larft, and one said as I'd grown fat since yesterday. The Turkey was a lot niceter than beef, but I didnt tell them it was. We had sossige to it, but mother had to buy that with a sixpence. My mother earns all the vittles we eat, except the meat, with washin at gentlemen's houses, and my father drinks beer, and brings the meat, and buys coals. All boys hate live Turkeys, and Turkeys hate boys. Boys hit the

skin of the Turkey with a stick when the Turkey is turned the other way, and then the boys run away and the Turkey runs after them.

"The Turkey makes a queer noise called goblin, like as if there was bits of balls a rattlin in its neck. It is a half tame bird, and if you are kind to it, it will let you feed it. Boys pretend they've got a bit of bread in their hand when it is only oringe pill, and when the Turkey comes up nicetly and picks it out of their hands, it sneezes it out of its mouth again, and then chiveys them a long way up the road. Boys like the Turkey to run after them, because they get home quicker without feelin tired, and the turkey has to go all the way back, and you genelly see a Turkey along with some ducks. But the Turkey is kind to the little ducks, which is a lesson you learn to be kind to your little brothers and sisters. Never make your little brother cry by hiding behind a wall or tree, and pertending to lose him, for Turkeys never pick nor worrys neither ducks nor hens. Turkeys lay very dear eggs what you cant afford, but they do not give butter or milk because they cant do it not if they tried three times."

CHAPTER IV.

THE next papers in my collection are two essays by Tom ——, one on "Our Street," and the other on "A visit to the Zoological Gardens."

A certain event took place at school in connection with the lad's mother which forced the fact to come to my knowledge that little Tom's father had died on the scaffold. None but myself and a divisional Member of the Board became aware of it, and I need not say that we never allowed the news to transpire. From that time I "kept an eye" on the poor child, and did all I could to render his school days happy.

He was a good lad in the highest sense of the term; for, in spite of the vicious surroundings of the low, poverty-stricken locality in which he lived, his little heart—thanks to a mother's training—was as pure as the sunlight, and his lips would have scorned a lie.

I see that in one of his compositions he has mentioned his own Christian name, and I think it judicious to make a substitution. Accordingly, I give it you as *Tom*.

A little girl's name, too, which occurs in one of the essays, I shall likewise disguise. With these exceptions, I shall transcribe the lad's exercises word for word as they are before me. He was always dreadful at spelling, and these two pieces, I am not surprised to find, fairly teem with orthographical errors.

Tom is now a journeyman plumber, and rents a little honeysuckled cottage some miles out of town. His mother lives with him, and on each Saturday afternoon he hands over to her pretty well every farthing he earns. He was a rigid abstainer when last I saw him two years ago; but, as he said, he never forced his opinions upon his mates. His mother, he told me, had earnestly desired him to live without intoxicants, and that was *his* reason for being a teetotaler. No other reason he had, and no other he wanted. Tom is not married; but, if I were writing a romance, I should doubtless make him engaged to a certain interesting little personage whom he

speaks of in one of his exercises as Liza Ann. But alas, reader, I am bound down to facts; and so I can give you no grounds for such an assumption. Still, it *may* be so, and thus I will leave it.

First I give you Tom's exercise on

"OUR STREET."

"Our street is a long lane betwixt two big streets. Our street is not so clean as the big streets, coz yer mothers throw the slops and things in the gutter, and chucks bits of Lloyds and cabbige leaves in the middle of the road. That's why there's allus a funny smell down our street, speshally when it's hot. I like to sit with some more boys and girls in the dark passige wot is by the side of our house, and tell tails about where you've been. We often sit there waiting while our fathers and mothers cum home from work. I've seen more far away places than some of them, and the girls are allus a arsking me to tell them wot I nose. The boys sit on one side of the passige with their backs to the walls, and the girls sit on the other side with their arms round one another's bodies, and they

all listen. I don't no why girls are so fond of cuddlin one anuther. Then when we hear a man or anybody cumin up the passige, we drawr our legs in, and we say, 'Will yer pleace mind our feet, Sir?' and the men nearly allus says 'All right, littluns; keep sat still, and we'll walk through the middle on yer.' But when a man is drunk, we allus stan up, coz drunken men have lost their senses. Liza Ann, the little girl wot lives up the next passige but comes to our passige to join in, she says she likes drunken men better than drunken women. She says that, coz drunken men are sometimes very kind and turn their trousers pockets inside out so as all their money can fall out amongst the children. But drunken women allus look savage and want to scratch the big poleeceman as pushes them on, and then they want to fight the women as is stannin at the doors just alooking on.

"Our home is on the second floor, but it is in the front. We have one big room with two winders, and a little sort of room without a winder. There's only my mother and me, so we have plenty of room, but I sometime feel frightened when the floor gives a crak coz of the boards a moving.

"My mother says my father is a soldyer, but she doesnt no where he is, and she thinks he died away in Afrika. I only just remember him. It seems as if when I used to see him, he was allus a wobblin about, and Liza Ann says she thinks that praps it's coz he was allus drunk, but mother says it's all my fancy. There is not many shops in our street, only greenstuff shops, and fried fish shops. Some of the boys and girls in our street don't have boots and stockins, not even in winter, but my mother allus lets me have boots and stockins. When hers and mine want mendin together and she has not got much money, she allus lets me tak mine to be mended first. The sun don't seem to shine so nicely down our street as in the big streets, and flowers and grass won't grow neether back nor front. There is some people wot lives on the same floor as us, only they are porer than us, and that's why they have the back of our floor. The man he goes about sellin fish, mostly herrins, and they are a allus having herrins to their dinners and suppers, and it makes our room smell so nasty that mother sneezes and can't sleep sometimes. They throw the badins

through the winder into the bin, and the dogs and cats wot live in our street find out the bins and cum and eat the bestuns. The reason why the houses in our street is so black both inside and out, is coz the smoke from the chimbly doesnt go right up outside and then into the clouds same as in niced streets, but it cums down the chimbly agen and puffs into the room and gets away out of the winder. This is all I know for once about our street."

The next essay is dated seven months later, and the subject is "A visit to the Zoological Gardens."

No doubt I permitted the boys to choose their own subject, and I likewise have no doubt that I spelt the word *Zoological* for the little essayist, since I observe that he has got it down quite correctly. In fact it is a common thing for boys to ask the teacher to write their title on the blackboard,—the reason being, I surmise, that, in the first place, they get a word or two ready spelt for them, and, in the second, they receive from it some kind of inspiration to commence their task.

The following, then, is little Tom's effusion on this visit.

"A VISIT TO THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

"Of all the animals in this world, the Zoological Gardens is the most. You go in by a gate, and, when you have got a bit way down, there they are all round you. Ameriky can't be nothin to it. They can't run about and hurt you, coz there's a kage dropped over them all. They look so vexed coz you can see all they do and can have a good stare all round at them; and they keep lookin in the corners to see if they can't find some bushes and things to hide behint.

"The lion, which is the king of all the animals wot ever lived, was so little that I shouldn't have noen it was him, only I have seen picters, and my mother said 'Look, Tom, now you can say as you've seen a lion.' Why he isn't quarter as big as a eliphent, and he hasn't got no trunk. I think the eliphent could master him if he liked; but the big silly won't try, coz he's so kind, and doesn't want to be king. The lion is yeller, but not so yeller as in the picter book what the Board gev me. He looks at yer through the bars like as wot he was saying 'you

think as you can fight, don't yer, little boy, just coz you no I can't get out all coz of this bloomin kage. If I could only skweez through, I'd swallow you and yer mother too.' I said to my mother 'I should like to hear the lion aroaring.' When she said 'why that was aroaring just now when the keeper looked in at him.' Then I nearly cried, I was so wild; why, it wasn't like thunder and lightnin at all. It just opened its mouth wide, like as yev seed men sittin at their doors and a gaping on Sunday afternoons, and it yoped no louder than a apple cart man does.

"When we got to the girraffs, I did like them. They are just the same as the picters, only alive and walking about. They have little tails, but the girraffs is so big, that you'd say as they couldn't wag em. But they can, just as easy as a little dog can, whether yer bleeve it or don't. They look at you so nicet, just like carves. The hippopotamus is like a little mashed eliphent with its trunk sawed off. Its skin is so thick that it can stay in its pond all day without the water soakin through. It makes yer shiver when its eyes look up at yer. Its

eyes are like bits of hard, bright mud with no white, and bleedin red skin all round.

"Kangeroos are so niced that you can look a long time at them without feelin tired. Their back legs are about four times longer than the front ones, and they are a lot too big behind. They sit up just like dogs a begging, and they have a bag right in front for their babies to roll about in. They run so silly, just as if they was tryin to dance at the same time as they are running. The fox, wot I thought was as big as carves, isn't worth a lookin at coz of its size. It's not a bit of good it bein sly where it is now, coz there's no farmers nor huntin men allowed in the kages. It looks as if it wanted to be sly but can't. When I said to my mother 'how it smell,' she said 'Come along to the other animals; that's its slyness.'

"I like the eliphent more than all the uthers, and my mother let me have a ride. You feel as if you were in a balloon. My mother walked by the side and kept a looking up and arsking me how I liked it, but I couldn't tell her till I came down, coz I was rather frightened of talking fear I should slip off. The eliphent wot I rode

on is called jumbo, and it is the nicetist quadrerped as ever was seed. It looks as if it couldn't all of it die, it is so big. I held a bit of bread out to it, but it wouldn't take it, coz there was a lady with a fine dressed little girl who was a givin it sugar buns. I kem away cryin, coz I should have liked to have told the boys as I had fed jumbo. But I didn't, so I can't say it.

"My mother and me then sat down and eat our bread and meat, and drank some milk she had brought in a ginger-beer bottle. My mother seemed to love me a deal that day, coz when we sometimes got to a quiet place, she would stoop down and kiss me a minit, and once she arskt me if I would allus love her and be a good boy. Why in course I should, I don't love nobody else like her. My mother didn't seem as if she wanted to go back in the bus to our street, for she kept sayin to me 'Don't you think the grass and trees is nicet, Tommy?' and then I allus said 'Yes, mother,' and looked at them coz she wanted me. I sat on her nee all the way in the bus, and went to sleep."

CHAPTER V.

CERTAIN recollections—exemplifying one or other of the many phases of primary school work—attach to another of my little pupils. He was a cripple, and had been rendered so by a fall from his father's arms. Still, he was, on the whole, a bright, cheerful little fellow; and, in spite of his deformity, he entered with zest into all those games from which his affliction did not perforce exclude him. However, I have often seen the lad limp into a corner of the playground, and have a good cry all by himself, when the lads with whom he was playing suddenly changed their game—as boys do—for one that was too boisterous for him to take part in.

The lad's father once wrote a letter of complaint to the Board, charging the teacher with tripping the little lad up whilst crossing the class-room. The charge was an utterly false

one; but the assistant was kept a month in anxious suspense before he was examined by the committee and exonerated. This assistant was a particularly generous fellow, and I know that he was especially kind to this poor lad, often giving him a penny to spend out of sheer sympathy.

Well. I give you an exercise by this boy which was written when he was eleven years of age. The question to be answered was a Scriptural one, namely, "Give a short account of the prophet Elijah." Now the lad had evidently forgotten his *Elijah*, and you will note that he artfully evades the question, and actually gives instead a history of *Elisha*.

"Elijah was a very good man, but not quite so good as Elisha. Elisha came after Elijah. They was both real profits, and was very much respected. Elijah was taken up to Heaven without dyin in bed, same as you and me will have to, but he went up in a chariet of fire jest like fireworks as I once seed at the Crystal Palace, and got cold with standin all in the rain a watching them with my uncle. But it was Lord Bekonsfield, not Elijah, as you seed blowed

up at the Palace. Elijah was blowed up on Mount Sinai. Everythink got burnt exept his mantle, which Elisha catched hold of while Elijah was arisin. Some people dont know as what the jews called mantles, all gentiles calls shawls; but they hadnt no trimmins.

"You couldnt tell men jews from women jews, exept by the men having beards and by their big red feet. The women's feet was little and white, and most allways nice and clean. They used to wash them with preshus oil, not with suds like you. The jews' mantles were more beautiful than you think—some red, and some blue. They had no top hats and no trousers, on account of the burning sun.

"Elisha brought a young dead man to life again by lying on the top of him, and blowin into his mouth and up his nose. This made the wind come into the young dead man's body, and behold he sprang right up on to the bed and begun to sneeze. Then his mother new he had come round, and she fell on to his neck, saying, 'Here am I, my son.' And the young man said, "So am I.' And so they kept a bracing, and Elisha saw all these things, and it come

to pass that he wept. This is what you call miracles. You cant do it, because you did not live in those days. The lessons what you learn is, allways to be good, and not to think that nobody cares for you."

Another effort by this lad which I have preserved is a composition upon "Insects." I think proper to withhold one sentence from it, for a reason which I need not mention:—

"Insects are very little things that fly or scrawl about. You mustnt call things insects that's as big as a mouse, because you would be telling a falsehood you would. All insects are not to be killed, except the beetle, the spider, and the insects in dirty boys' hair. You should love all other insects.

"I once put my hand in my pocket, and some beetles was in the corner of it, which I thought was crumbs of bread. But when I felt them all scriggle about in my hand, I fainted, I did. I have never liked beetles since they deceived me so. If you tread hard on a beetle and your boots are thin, it makes the bottom of your foot tickle when the beetle cracks. Allways kill them quickly, for how would you like scrunching slowly?

"Spiders are the cruellist insects which ever lived. They let some thread come out of their bodies, just same as you do when yer flying yer kites, and then they make a web of it to catch flies. Then they skwert juice on to it to make it sticky, same as catchem alive papers what you buy, and then they hide behind a leaf. When the fly gets cote, the spider comes from behind the leaf, skwerts some more juice on to the fly's wings so as it cant fly away, and then rolls it over and sucks its blood.

"I have seed boys catch black beetles and make them race, and then they kill the one as loses. This is very cruel sport, most as bad as rat catchin. How would you like to be killed because you cant run?

"The prettiest insect in all this world is the ladybird. It is red with black dots. When boys catch ladybirds they never kill them, but they let them stand on the back of their hand, and they say—

"'Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home,
The house is all empty, yer brothers all gone,
All but one sat under a stone,
Writin a letter as farst as he can.'

Then the boy touches it behind, and it flies away.

"Crickets are those insects that sing behind the firegrate. Never kill crickets, for I tell yer I once killed a cricket while my mother was a mangling and I was a rocking the baby by the side of the mangle, lookin in the fire, and then my mother began crying, saying baby would never have no luck. Then I cried, and then the baby started a crying and wouldnt go to sleep. I'm sure I shant kill no more crickets, for I loves our baby more than yer think."

CHAPTER VI.

I WILL open this chapter by an anecdote in connection with the little cripple before mentioned, and the assistant teacher in whose class he was, and whom, you will remember, the cripple's father shamelessly charged with assault.

I chanced to go into the assistant's class-room one dinner hour, the room being quite empty at the time, with the exception of two or three boys who came from a distance, and had brought their meal with them. When I got in the room one of the lads—whose dinner consisted of a thick hunch of bread and the half of a cold bloater—was engaged in making a chalk sketch on one of the blackboards. He was so deeply interested in his work, with the chalk in his right hand and the bread-and-herring in his left, that he did not observe my approach, and so I

had the opportunity of standing behind him and seeing him finish.

The drawing roughly represented a tall man with thin angular legs, carrying on his back a little egg-shaped boy, whose arms were circling the man's neck, whilst his diminutive legs were thrown out horizontally in the air. In addition to the burden on his back, the man held in his left hand what looked like two long, straight, clothes-props.

Of course the young artist was very much taken aback when, on completing his sketch and taking a good big bite of his bloater, he suddenly turned round and found me standing over him.

"Well, Stevens," I asked, good-humouredly, "what does your drawing represent?"

"If yer please, Sir," answered the lad, "It stands for our teacher carrying the lame boy on his back last Saturday."

And then I gathered from the lad, bit by bit, what amounted to the following details.

The assistant, it would seem, was in the habit of taking his class for a Saturday country ramble from time to time. He had done so on the previous Saturday, and the little cripple, in

spite of his affliction, turned up at the school gates at the appointed hour to accompany the party. When they got to H——, a village about five miles out, the teacher, having made all the lads sit down on a stretch of turf near a wayside inn, went straightway inside the hostelry, and ordered for every youngster twopenny-worth of bread and cheese, paying for the whole out of his own pocket.

The food was brought out in a huge basket, and distributed to the children. Meanwhile the teacher's young wife had tripped to a neighbouring homestead, whence she returned accompanied by a yokel, bearing on his yoke two pails of milk. Then, whilst the teacher was seeing that his lads had plenty of bread and cheese, his good little wife flitted about with mugs of sweet milk.

And, reader, you will probably be surprised to learn that this assistant teacher's salary was only seventy-five pounds a year, and this in spite of the fact that he was a Bachelor of Science. However, he had the misfortune not to have been educated at a Training College, and this is a terrible ban to a modern school-

master. A non-collegiate's remuneration under the London School Board does not average that of a navvy, and even the trained assistant's salary is altogether inadequate to the maintenance of anything like a respectable position.

But I have not got to the gist of my narrative. What was the meaning of the little artist's drawing of the teacher and the crippled boy? Well, it was this. It seems that on the return journey, when the lads had got to C——, a distance of four miles from home, the little cripple fairly broke down, and could not walk a step further.

Then the teacher hauled the little fellow up on to his back, tucked his crutches away under his own arm, and carried the boy thus every step of the way home. And the sight of the teacher carrying the lame child had so worked on our little artist's feelings and had so clung to his memory, that, as if impelled by some mesmeric influence, he had walked up to the blackboard during his dinner hour and had made an effort to depict the scene.

And now I noticed, on surveying the drawing again, that one of the little horizontal legs was

only half the length of the other; and this, I surmised, was the manner in which the artist had attempted to pictorially convey the fact that the rider was, as boys term it, dolly-legged. I now knew, also, that what had looked to me like clothes-props, were in fact intended to represent the cripple's crutches.

I thank thee, my lad, for thy uncouth little sketch and thy simply-told tale of thy teacher's kind act; for, reader, there was to my mind, as much poetry and dignity in that young schoolmaster stooping for miles beneath the burden of a poor gutter cripple, as in Virgil's pious hero bearing his aged father and his household gods from the ruins of Troy.

Now that I have mentioned the little artist, Johnny Stevens, I will give an exercise of his upon "Honesty." It is written in a hand which many of my readers would have cause to envy, for it is simply as elegant as caligraphy well can be. And yet Johnny now—six years later—is neither artist nor clerk, but an ordinary platelayer on the railway, with grimy face and thick horny hands. Some months ago he called at the schools and left a splendid bunch of roses

for me. When the lad was at school, I remember, he often used to bring his teacher some little flower or other for a button-hole. This, however, is no uncommon thing for boys to do; and I have frequently stuck in my coat some ragged nasturtium or some dilapidated double-daisy which has been handed up to me by one or other of my little scholars, rather than hurt the child's feelings by placing it aside. It is a wondrous satisfaction to a boy to be able to say to his school-fellows, "That's *my* flower that the master's a wearing!"

And now for Johnny Stevens' essay on

"HONESTY."

"Honesty is a thing what you can't see, but only feel. You mustn't think that because you can't see it, you haven't got to do it. For you have. You can't see God, but your conshenses tells you that there is God, you know that quite well. Honesty is one of the most important things that ever was. If everybody was honest, how comfortable should we be. Some boys steals little things and such, and yet they go and think they've got honesty. But they hav'nt

got it, that's flat. It says in the First Standard Reading Books, 'It is a sin to steal a pin;' so there you are.

"Some folks think they have got honesty, if they finds a thing in the street and keeps it. Keeping things is stealing just the same. When you finds anything, always give it to your teachers or your mothers, and then you will have honesty. I was once running after a man who a perliceman was a taking to the station for stealing, and when I kept a running round him and looking up into his face, what do you think I seed? I seed he couldn't look me straight in the eyes, much less stare me out. He was a blushing, he was, I tell you. I seed him. Then he swore at me and the other boys, and he telld the perliceman to drive us back. And the perliceman was frightened of him, and drove us back. Praps that man started with stealing bits of pencils and penknives.

"Some boys thinks that when they copy other boys' sums and spellings, they have got honesty. But copying sums is as worse as stealing apples. If you can't do them there sums called problems, scratch your heads and

try. The inspector once gave us a problem to do about a little boy as had ten sovrins give him by a gentleman, and if the boy give away 12 half-crowns, and lost 13 shillings, and spent 11 threepenny-pieces, and put two pound 15 and a hod penny into the savings bank, how much would he have left in his pocket?

"Well I couldn't do it at first, speshully as a lady was a talking and a larfing with another gentleman all the time I was a thinking. But I wouldn't copy off of the next boy, though I new he was a finding it out all right by his writing so quick. I just shut my eyes and put my left finger in my ear, and scratched my head and I thinked like mad, till I found out how to start at it; and I just finished it as the inspector was a saying 'All stop; time's up.' When you have honesty, you have a kind of a sort of a nice feeling in your inside what is called happy; and isn't this a lot better than always being frightened at people, and crossing over the road when you see a perliceman? You knows it is; then always have honesty, never mind about not seeing it."

CHAPTER VII.

BOYS are always delighted when they are set to write an exercise upon domestic animals. I have a large number of specimens written by my pupils from time to time; and whenever I re-peruse them, I am kept perforce in a continuous state of merriment.

In every school there is always a moderate percentage of boys who *must* be original, or otherwise they simply collapse ignominiously, and fail to execute the requisite number of lines for a complete class exercise. It is *aut Cæsar aut nullus* with them. I have remarked, too, that it is these little originals who, when their brief school-life is over, are the very ones to get on in the world and to chip their way to comparative ease and comfort.

Boys of this calibre "play when they play,

and work when they work." In the playground they are the merriest of the merry, fairly perspiring with enthusiasm and energy, romping "like mad," and making, meanwhile, such havoc with jacket and trousers as generally to necessitate an hour's darning and patching after bedtime by a mother's never-tiring hands. They are invariably the "leaders of sides," the arbiters in disputes, and the general referees of the school-yard's busy round.

But in school hours it is they, likewise, who settle down to their tasks quickly and in earnest. Is it an arithmetic lesson? Well, they are the lads whom problems don't frighten—not one little bit; and who, far from blenching or wincing when *mental* arithmetic is announced, fairly revel in the intellectual gymnastics. Or is it a reading lesson? They are the boys who read with expression and feeling, although, perhaps, they may not read half so fluently as their fellows. Indeed, the effort of these little originals to give appropriate emphasis and modulation to the words and sentences they are enunciating sometimes borders on the ludicrous. Still, the schoolmaster prefers such brave attempts to the

monotony and rapidity of the ordinary class-boy.

But, nevertheless, it is in *composition* that original propensities and characteristics are rendered most striking. The bare sight of one of these lads writing down an exercise "all out of his own head," would be most amusing to a stranger, could he but watch the embryo Macaulay without being himself observed. The lad's position whilst seeking for an idea, and then whilst mentally clothing it in appropriate terms, is an attitude of sheer intellectual *abandon* —the fingers of the left hand buried in his tangled hair, and ever and anon relaxing themselves for a spasmodic scratch; the left eye turned upward to the ceiling for inspiration, the right being philosophically closed, as if to shut out the disturbing influences of the external world. This is position No. 1.

Then, when the lad has got an idea, and has likewise mentally "dressed it up" ready for writing down, he at once assumes position No. 2 —that of the earnest scribe. He invariably licks his pen first, then dips it deep down in the well, jerks the excess of ink on to his trousers or on

the floor, gets his right hand in pose, rests his left ear on the back of his left hand, rolls his eyes, curls out his tongue, and lovingly commits his idea to paper.

I have chosen the exercise of Tom ——— on "The Cow," because little Tom was just such a lad as I have described. His parents were poor, being cats'-meat vendors in a very small way. Their customers were spread far and wide about the district; and, in the last year of his school life, the Board accorded Tom the privilege of half-time, so that he could assist his father in his rounds. Thus the poor lad had to work hard with his brains in the mornings, whilst in the afternoons he had to trudge weary mile after weary mile with a huge basket of cats' food swung upon his arm. I forbear giving the lad's full name, because now he is a junior partner in a large firm of "horse slaughterers," besides being the Chairman of a Local Board, and (as he lately hinted to me) he has higher aims still.

The following, then, is a *verbatim* transcription of Tom's composition exercise on

"THE COW."

"The Cow is a noble quadrerped, though not so noble as the horse, much less the roaring Lion. It has four short legs, a big head for its size, and a thick body. Its back legs are bent, and there's two big bones sticking out just above. Its tail is more noble than the donkey's, but nothin to cum up to that of the race horse.

"The cow gives us milk, and niced beef, and shoolether. How thankful should childern be to this tame quadrerped. The reason why beef is so dear, is that cows cost so much, and the earth is gettin full of people. I allways have beef to my dinner on Sundays; on other days bread and drippin or bread and lard, sometimes treacle.

"Mother says that if I'm hungry on my rounds I can eat a bit of cat's meat if it doesnt smell, but I mustnt eat the liver, she says. How thankful ought we to be to the cow for nice hot beef. Pertaters grows; they are not on the cow.

"The four things what you sees under the

cow's belly are what the milk comes through. How thankful should we be. The cow makes milk from grass. God teaches the cow how to do it. A cow's feet is split in two, like sheeps; they are called hooves.

"Little cows are called carves. Carves are the stupidist of all tame quadrerpeds, except pigs and donkeys. When you drive a carf, never prick it behind, but push it gently with your flat hand. Men are crewel to carves coz they cant draw milk from them. You can genly find mushrooms in cows fields, but you mustnt go in if there's a board up. How would your mothers like you to be called trespass?

"Bulls are very much like cows, but are fierce quadrerpeds. You can allways tell bulls from cows, coz bulls are black, and not quite so fat. Bulls are not tame quadrerpeds, and they look as if they could run. You can allways tell them that way. When my mother sees a bull she allways stands with her back to the wall till its gone past, and she holds my hand. If a bull wanted to hurt my mother, I should pull mother in a hedge, and then kick out. Cows are painted different colours; white, and red, and yellow.

When they are black and white, they are genly half bulls, so you must not go near them.

"There is what is called cream, which rich people eats; it is got from cows which are all white. How thankful should rich people be for getting what they cali cream from the cow. You can learn lessons from this poor quadrerped; not to kick, not to trespass, and not to persecute people."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME nine years ago I had in my school a boy in whom—on account of his odd, old-fashioned ways—I took a special interest. I may say at once that he is now a clever, prosperous young surveyor and engineer out in the States, and it was only the other day that I received a communication from him thanking me in the most hearty terms for the attention he received from me whilst he was a pupil in my school. He tells me that if I should take a trip over to the States he could have no greater gratification than in entertaining me, and he gives me to understand that his fortunes are assured. He sends me his *carte-de-visite*, but I am bound to say that I quite fail to recognise him. Nine or ten years ago he was a little stout plain-looking lad, with bristled hair and patched clothes; but, according to this presentment, he appears now

to be a tall, almost handsome fellow, with a commanding and philosophic air. Still I seem to think that I can cull from his face the old merry twinkle of the eyes, and also a certain earnestness of expression which even as a chiid rendered him quaint and odd.

Here is a composition exercise of his upon "The Cat." I see I have marked under it in blue pencilling "Fair," but, in addition to this class-mark, I have further added "Send the boy to my desk at twelve;" and I have no doubt but that, when he came to me, I spent a quarter of an hour or so in an untutorial chat conducive to the correction of his erratic ability, and to the moulding and encouragement of that bent of genius which I perceived in him.

The exercise is as follows:—

"THE CAT.

"The house cat is a fourlegged quadruped, the legs as usuerl being at the corners. It is what is sometimes called a tame animal, though it feeds on mice and birds of prey. Its colours are striped, tortusshell, black,

also black and white, and uthers. When it is happy it does not bark, but breathes through its nose, instead of its mouth, but I can't remember the name they call the noise. It is a little word, but I can't think of it, and it is wrong to copy. Cats also mow, which you have all heard. When you stroke this tame quadruped by drawing yer hand along its back, it cocks up its tail like a ruler, so as you can't get no further. Never stroke the hairs acrost, as it makes all cats scrat like mad. Its tail is about too foot long, and its legs about one each. Never stroke a cat under the belly, as it is very unhelthy.

"Don't teese cats, for, firstly it is wrong so to do, and 2nd, cats have clawses which is longer then people think. Cats have 9 liveses, but which is seldom required in this country coz of Christianity. Men cats are allus called Tom, and girl cats, Puss or Tiss; but, queer as you may think, all little cats are called kittens, which is a wrong name which oughter be changed. This tame quadruped can see in the dark, so rats stand no chants, much less mice.

"Girls fears rats, even mice. Last Tewsday I drawed our cat on some white tea paper, and

I sold it to a boy who has a father for 20 pins and some coff drops. Cats are very useful. I can't remember one of the noises they make, though I've just been trying again. Cats eat meat and most anythink, speshully where you can't afford. This is all about cats."

Even pupil-teachers, in the earlier years of their probation, often betray by their examination papers, that they entertain strangely confused and erroneous notions. The following is a written answer to the question "Define a triangle (according to Euclid)." "A triangle may best be defined as the familiar square, only the former has *three* corners or angles. Therefore it is not a square. Q. E. D."

Another pupil-teacher (a young lady aged sixteen), gave the following original answer to the English History question "What is a Civil War? give a brief account of the causes which led to hostilities between Charles I. and his Parliament."—"A Civil War, if I recollect rightly, is one in which the military are unnecessarily and punctiliously civil or polite, often raising their helmets to each other before engaging in deadly combat. I cannot answer

the second part of the question, although I have read it. I presume I did not make notes upon it."

But to return to our little friends the scholars.

I was one day giving a class an oral examination in geography, when I asked the following question, amongst others, "What is the capital of China?"

Numbers of eager hands were soon waving in the air, and as many bright upturned faces earnestly sought to "catch the speaker's eye." However, I turned my attention to a boy at the end of his row, who, I noticed, had only elevated his hand after some deliberation, and even then with evident diffidence. "Well, William," I interrogated, "What do you say is the capital of China?" "Please, sir, nobody knows," responded the lad, "because the Chinese won't let strangers from other countries go in and see!" I may remark that such answers as these it would be very unwise on the teacher's part to check or discourage, for are they not the result of a mental effort of the pupil? and should not the chief aim of the teacher be, not the cramming of a crude mass of information into the

heads of these youngsters, but to teach them how to think for themselves? This is education; the other, but the frivolous conveyance of facts.

CHAPTER IX.

AN essay on "Politeness," by William Martin, which now lies before me, calls up some pleasant memories of the lad's school days. Martin's father was a working engineer of superior ability, and his wages were good and regular. Other than this I know nothing of the family. I am likewise unacquainted with William's career, for directly after his leaving school the family removed to a distant locality, and I lost sight of them altogether.

When William wrote this exercise on "Politeness," he was in the first class of the school, and was turned thirteen years of age. I find that there are certain touches in his piece, which are very characteristic of the lad's disposition. He was so unselfish, so noble and generous, that he

commanded affection and admiration on all sides. It was only cowardly and currish spirits that feared or envied William Martin; all others loved and honoured him. I never saw that grand text, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," better exemplified than in him; and I believe this could only have been the result of the most careful domestic training. Beyond a doubt, the parents had brought their son up to believe and to feel that he had to live, not only for himself, but for the comfort of others; and such a healthy home influence, seconded by day or Sunday school teaching, had had its fullest effect upon this dear lad. He was the champion of the weaklings, and the companion of the strong. His highest pleasure, I am sure, consisted in rendering others happy. Of course, Martin had his faults; but his kind thoughtfulness and his generosity were such as I have described.

One incident in connection with Martin I remember as if it had taken place but yesterday. The chief part of this interesting transaction I witnessed myself, and I gathered one or two details subsequently.

The lad had brought his dinner to school with him on this particular day, in order to have extra time, it would seem, for taking a prearranged stroll with two companions of about his own age. Now the two lads (who were brothers) were prevented from coming to school that morning, so Martin had virtually brought his dinner to no purpose. What did he do? As soon as twelve o'clock came, he sauntered up to a group of three or four little urchins who were huddled in a corner of the school munching dinners of the very humblest description, and he said, "Here, you young shavers, take and share this amongst you!" and he thereupon gave each of them a good piece of bread and juicy meat, and also equal portions of a tempting fruit pasty. The boy then walked away to have a hot dinner with his mother at home.

Now, what I would wish to point out is, not only the circumstance that the nobility of the lad's disposition led him to give away his dinner to those necessitous little scholars, but also the fact that he must have intuitively known that when he got home he *would not be blamed* for what he had done.

This little incident struck me forcibly at the time, and I have often told the anecdote since. Well might I speak of Will Martin as a "dear" lad, as I see I have done above, for I know not of any trait in juvenile character so irresistibly lovable as indubitable unselfishness.

And now I place before you Martin's exercise on "Politeness," copying it exactly from the lad's own writing.

"POLITENESS.

"Politeness is a rather difficult thing, especially when you are making a start. It means having the sense to sometimes think of others as well as of yourselves. Many people have not got it. I don't know why, unless it is the start.

It is not polite to fight little boys, except they throw stones at you. Then you can run after them, and when you've caught them, just do a little bit at them, that's all. Remember that all little boys are simpletons, or they wouldn't do it. It is not the thing to make fun of a little chap because he is poorer than you. Let him alone if you don't want to play with him, for he is as good as you, except the clothes. When

you are in school and a boy throws a bit of bread or anything at you over the desks, it is not polite to put your tongue out at him, or to twiddle your fingers in front of your nose. Just wait till after school, and then warn him what you'll do next time; or if you find you are bound to hit him, be pretty easy with him. Some boys are very rude over their meals. Don't keep on eating after you are tightning, and you will be far happier. Never eat quickly, or you might get bones in your throat. My father knows of a boy who got killed over his Sunday dinner. The greedy boy was picking a rabbit's head in a hurry, and swallowed one jaw of it, and my father says he was choked to death there and then. Be very polite over your meals, then, especially when it's rabbits. Since my father told me that, I have always felt rather queer over a rabbit dinner. I don't talk much, and don't ask for any more. It is not polite to leave vituals on your plate, especially anything you don't like. If you don't like turnips, it is better to eat well into your turnips first, while you are hungry, and you'll eat the meat and potatoes easy enough after. This is much better

than being impolite, and leaving a lot of turnip on the edge. It is not polite to tell tales of boys. When a boy tells a tale, allways call him—

"'Tell tale tit,
Your tongue shall be split,
All the dogs in the town
Shall have a little bit.'

You'll see how red he will turn, and cant look you and the other boys in the face.

"Boys should always be polite to girls, however vexing they may be. When anybody is giving anything away, always let the girls have their turn first. They like it. Girls are not so strong as boys, their hair is long, and their faces are prettier; so you should be gentle with them. If a girl scratches you on the cheek, or spits in your face, don't punch her, and don't tell her mother. That would be mean. Just hold her tight behind by her arms for a minute or two, till she feels you could give it her if you had a mind to. Then say to her kindly, 'Don't you do it again, for it is wrong;' give her a shake or two, and let her go. This is far better than being unkind to her, and she will thank you for your politeness, if she's anything of a girl."

The paper which I give next is a Scripture exercise, and is altogether of a different type.

The writer is Walter ———, whom I recollect as a roguish little fellow, always on the alert for mischief, and constantly getting into trouble for breaches of discipline. He could *not* keep his tongue still in class, and my only remedy was to put him apart by himself. He was one of those youngsters who can well nigh giggle on one side of the face, whilst looking sedate with the other. I have frequently heard suppressed titterings or other sounds of hilarity proceed from that portion of the room of which Walter ——— was the centre; but, however quickly I might turn my head towards him, his features would appear as stolid as stone, or he would simply turn an eye upon me of vacant listlessness or innocent inquiry. Play was all he cared for; and he left school a dunce—not because he couldn't, but because he wouldn't, learn. However, when I have said this, I have said the worst about him; for, in other respects, he was an agreeable little fellow. He was always willing to do anything for his teacher, except brain work; and one could not long be in a temper with him, in spite of his irritating little failings.

I believe he liked the Scripture lesson better than any other. At any rate, it was during that part of the school work that he gave the least trouble.

Here follows, then, this lad's account of

"DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN."

"It all happened, what I'm going to tell you on this paper about Daniel, in a country thousands of miles from here; further off than Jeriko even.

"In that wild country they keep lions in dark sellers under the ground, jest the same as your fathers and mothers keep cocks and hens. They catch these lions in the woods rarnd abart, put them in bags, bring them home on donkys what they call mules, and drop them out of the bag darn the hole, and then they put a big stone over the hole. How thankful shud we be that there is no lions in this country; why, your fathers couldnt have no bean feasts, and the teachers woodnt get no childern to go with them in their vans every year. In our fields and woods theres only foxs and rabbits, so they dont count.

"Now you couldnt guess for ever so long why Daniel was put darn into the Lion's den, so I'll tell you. It was for nothing else than just sayin his prayers, what do you thinker that? He woodnt never have been found out if he'd only have kept to sayin his prayers when he got up and when he went to bed; but he used for to say them in the middle of the day, just arter his dinner, and that's when some wickerd men secd him from behind the blinds. Then they split on him to the king, and the king was sorry fit to cry, becose he lovd Daniel like unto his brother.

"These wickerd men with their nasty faces all alarfin, caught hold of Daniel when it was gettin dark, and pulled him along the streets to the first hole they came to where they new there was some fearst lions down. Then they thrusted the stone off, and whipped him down just like winkin. And the poor king sat on the stone cryin like his hart wood break, and the wickerd nasty men kept runnin rarnd the king all alarfin.

"Then the good king went away to bed, and see you, he couldnt get off to sleep for thinkin wether the lions was a chawin poor Daniel.

Then they played all kinds of mewsik to him, but it only made him wild, and he got up and told them to go away with their screetin.

"And behold as soon as it was light, he ran to the lion's den, and called out loud down the hole, a saying 'Daniel, Daniel, art thou alive, poor Daniel?' and bustin with cryin all the time. And then (if you go and say yev heard anythink like it afore, you just a sayin it becose you no it), Daniel was alive, I tell you, walkin in and out and rarnd abart the beastes, thinkin no more abart it than if they was mice.

"God had sent a good Angil to take care of Daniel becose he wasnt shamed of sayin all his prayers. This is trew, say what you like.

"Daniel scrambled out through the hole, and if you could have seed the king and him a kissin rarnd one anuther's necks, and a lookin at one anuther's eyes and a cryin, you wood praps have cryd too, there now I tell you. The king made up his mind straigt off as he wood never pray to wooden imiges again, and Daniel was a frend of his till they both died and was buryd."

CHAPTER X.

I REMEMBER one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools asking a question in Grammar which evoked a very amusing answer. The question was certainly a somewhat abstruse one, but I don't believe the representative of "my lords" put it with any but justifiable intentions, for he was really a good-hearted man, and a thorough lover of children. He was dealing with the genders of nouns, and, after asking the stereotyped questions of "What is the feminine of "lion?" and getting "lioness" from the youngsters glibly and eagerly; then following with "Marquis," and getting for answer "Marchioness" almost equally promptly; he finally asked "And what now is the feminine of "Dutchman?" "Duchess, sir," cried out nearly the whole class without the slightest hesitation.

gleanin, but think of yer mothers and sisters, praps dying. Be fair.

"Patriarchs had more fields than farmers have, a lot bigger too. Nobody can't imagine. Benjimun was the littlest son, but the loving patriarch Jacob allus gave him the biggest mess of corn, never mind how little he was. They allus called pudden, and porrij, and anything like that, they allus called it messes in those days. Joseph could eat a big mess, too; but Rewbin and Juder who was the oldest couldn't eat as much as yer might think. The patriarch Jacob never eat scarcely nothin, exept when there was a famine.

"Joseph was very fond of dreaming. The big brothers would allus wake him up when they heard him adreaming, coz they knew he was adreaming all sorts of nasty things abart them. He once dreamed they were nothin but stars; they didn't like that mind yer; and he dreamed that the patriarch Jacob was the sun and his wife the moon. Behold he was allus a dreaming. He dreamed that his brothers were just bits of corn stuck up round him; and they were very roth agenst him, speshully as there was a famine

in the land, and not a bit of corn anywheres round. The patriarch once gave unto Joseph a coat all kindser colours, for childern liked coloured close in those days. But his brothers were more riled still, what they called roth. They couldn't never see him with his red and blue coat on, without sayin to one another, behold we will have his blood. The patriarch saw all these things, and he told them how his hair was a turnin gray, more with their carryinson than with the famine. He arsket them to remember Abraham, Izak, and Jacob, and to allus love their little brother. And then Rewbin and Juder and the other men answered unto him that they couldn't stand his dreams, and that if he stopped a dreaming, they would be good unto him, like as they was to Benjimun. This is all I can say about this large family."

Another essay by this lad will, I think, be found equally interesting. The subject is

"THE ROBIN REDBREAST."

"I see a robin redbreast for the first time this year, and I see the second one in Whitsun, else

Easter. Them's the two I see. Boys and girls thinks as sparrows is niced birds, but I've told them nearly twenty times as they don't know nothin at all abart it. Why, they can't sing, and they haven't got a bit of red, not even white, anywheres abart there bodies. They're just worth nothin. They only pertend they're worth something by flying away when you try to catch them. It's all pertending. Why, they can't build picter nests, and can only lay nasty mucky eggs. Even police won't catch them, coz they know same as yer fathers, that they're no good.

"When I see that first robin I did tremble. It was on the top of a close prop in a gentleman's back garden nearly in the country. My father had took me and my sister a long walk to a niced place they call Hamsted, coz he was out of work, and my mother give him fourpence as he had got laundrin. My mother told my father to buy two cups of tea for himself, and one each for Clara and me, and she give us some niced bread and butter and two bread and dippin in a paper with picters on.

"My father said 'stop, Jack, don't move,

there's a robin.' Then I was all a trembling, and my throat felt so queer. I said 'where, father?' and he said, 'on the top of that close prop, through the palins just by that shert, Jack.' I see it fair. It was lookin straight at me, and I see every bit of the red. And Clara wispered 'pretty robin,' without movin, and I stood and didn't wink longer than when yer play starin outs. Then a lady with a white cap came out of the back door, and begun a feelin at the close, and she scared the robin away. Then she looked through the palins at us, and said something as made us walk on. Her face was redder than yer mothers.

"As we was walking on I told my father all abart what I learns at school abart the robin redbreast, how it builds a niced round nest in a little bush, and singing at peoples doors to please them. And Clara told all abart the robins coverin up that little boy and girl what is called the babes in the wood. Father said as men liked to sing abart the death of cock robin, what an old sparrow killed. We arsket him to sing it, and he said he would when he had past the station, coz there was two railway men

lookin at us as if we was going into the station without payin.

"When we got by the side of some grass, father sung it for us, and we did like it. There was one line come most, which was 'all the birds in the air went a sine and a sobbin, when they heard of the death of pore cock robin.' Clara cryd a little bit, and she arsket father how birds sined and sobbed, and father said as she was to arsk her mother when she got home. He said he felt cold and wanted his tea.

"Our tea made us niced and warm, and there was a big fire in the room, and a orgin man a playing outside. When he come in, the woman give him a cup of tea as he took out, and my father said the man didn't pay nothin for it. My father give her four pennies. There was someone sitting at our table as had a niced smellin red herrin, which he eat all up exept scarcely anything at all. I see him all the time, though he thought as I was lookin at the picter paper, but I was lookin over the top of it a watching him eatin.

"That other robin as I see was singing. My father was building a house, and he took me

with him on a Saturday to help him carry sum sticks and things back to keep good fires. The robin just flew over a wall quick as you throw stones, and dropped on a tree as was cut down, and begun a singing ever so, straight off. Why twenty sparrows all trying their hardest couldn't do anything like it. Them sparrows don't stop long enough in one place and have a good try, like as robins do. Why if you just move yer arm without meanin to throw at all, they fly to the top of the spout, and look at you till you've gone away from them. Robins live abart as long as other birds of the same size. They don't live as long as growd up people, coz of the size. Never take robins nestes, for you will never forget it long as you live. You should not think as birds can't feel if you hit them with a stone. Birds have blood."

I see, too, that I have pinned to Johnny Whittaker's paper, a slip containing a quaint answer he once made to a question in geography.

The inspector was examining a class, of which Johnny was a member, in elementary geography.

After dealing with the definitions (Cape,

River, Table-land, &c.), and the size and shape of the earth, he asked, "What would you expect to see on rivers, boys?" Of course he wanted the answer "boats," or "vessels," but he by no means got that answer from Johnny Whittaker. A goodly number of eager hands were at once thrown out, and I have no doubt but that the great majority of the lads were going to give the answer he wished for; but, unfortunately, he pointed in the direction of Johnny Whittaker, and said "You, boy, what do you say we find on rivers?" "Bits o' sticks and straw, Sir!" cried Johnny. Poor lad, he was doubtless thinking of some neighbouring stream or gutter in which he had dabbled for the hour together catching the dirty refuse in its eddying course.

CHAPTER XI.

DO you know I always had a strangely weak fondness for my *Dunces;* although I confess that *out* of school, I take pleasure in recapitulating their freaks of genius.

The quivering lip, the restless eye, the twitching fingers, and the glances of wonderment to right and left on hearing an ordinary class-fellow give an ordinary answer to an ordinary question! How often have I witnessed these piteous signs of incapacity. Heigho! A tear in my eye! You young rascals, you'll never know it, but you provoke a tear almost as often as you provoke—*you know*—one of my stern ominous glances. Here boy—it's twelve o'clock I see—take this and buy yourself something to suck. Don't buy it coloured now! There, there; you'll be as sharp as the other boys some day, *perhaps.*

George Lee was one of these poor little creatures of weak intellect. His father was a

well-spoken, respectable man,—a hard-working law writer, who had to catch his train at nine in the morning, slave through his folios in a copper-plate hand till dusk, on the tally system; and, when he got back to the bosom of his family in the evening, he was often (he has told me) too fagged out to chat with his Georgie, who liked to stay up for a parting good-night fondle.

I recollect Georgie giving a striking answer in geography, under circumstances which deserve a full relation.

The class was being questioned in geographical outlines by one of the "managers" of the school.

Every Board School has a group of "managers" attached to it; and these gentlemen, as a rule, are well educated, refined, and sympathetic. However, there are exceptions; and these exceptional individuals have it in their power to render themselves "flies in the ointment" to the Education Department, to the Board, to their brother managers, and to the teachers.

The particular manager above referred to was the owner of three or four oil-and-colour shops, had a comfortable villa residence in the suburbs,

but was as ignorant of Queen's English as a Hottentot. He was tall and bony, badly pitted with small-pox, and his long black hair was smoothed and scented with some abominable kind of oil.

The man made no secret of the fact that he had received all his juvenile education at the Sunday School, and that the newspapers had done duty for college and travel. There was always a "daily" either in his hand or perking forth out of his breast pocket.

Well, I remember this man once standing by me during a geography lesson, and (with a bland apology to me) cynically interposing the following question to the boys:—"If I bored a hole right through the earth till I came out at the other side, where should I be?" I need not say that he wanted for answer "New Zealand," or "The Pacific Ocean"; but, on his pointing to poor shallow-minded Georgie Lee (who was sitting in the front row right under the manager's nose) he got the prompt reply, "Off yer head, Sir! Yer can't do it!"

The manager felt that this little scholar had made him look foolish; and, taking the lad's

tiny ears in his big, coarse fingers, he gruffly remonstrated, "You silly little boy, I said 'If, *If*, IF,'"—at the same time giving Georgie's ears three separate twitches on each of the "If's." He pretended to perform the action playfully; but I could see by the lad's screwed-up features and raised hands that the manager's wrenches were not so innocent as he tried to make them appear.

Here, before me, reader, lies an essay of George's upon

"A DAY IN THE COUNTRY."

"A Day in the Country is wot I has to giv. O the country is so niced. Yer woodnt beleeve. I have seed it 5 or 6 times. It was like a grate big green sea. Yer woodnt beleeve. I only see it wunce a yere, when our Supintendunt taks the Sunday School childern all for nothin, an givs us a tea an all sorts of niced things. This time it was to Ashsted. We all woked from our Sunday School, which is near the Ellifunt, to Voxhole Station, the Supintendunt runnin up an darn all the time, makin us joyn hans. Then we all got up into the train at Voxhole. How

niced it is to have yer heds art of the winders and hould yer handkerchers up, and see the different peeple hooray to yer from the side of the railway. Yer woodnt beleeve. They think as we can hear them hoorayin, but we cant, coz of the wheels making such a niced loud noise. When we got past what the Supintendunt telld us was Wimmeldun, wichever side yer looked it was all green, an green, an green. It duz mak yer feel hungry, speshully with the wind gettin darn yer throats. Yer woodn't beleeve. When we got to Ashsted, yer woodn't beleeve wot a niced place it was; why, I tell yer, its green all rarnd rite to the sky, an foxgluvs, an roses, an bulldayzis all abart. There's no roads, an no walls, an no trespsin boards, an' there's no pleecemen lives there. They havnt found it art. When wee'd had our dinners, the Supintendunt plaid games with the little boys. The Supintendunt is a niced fat man, with white hair, allis a larfin, an a big chain in his westcutt. We plaid leapfrogs, an the Supintendunt took his coat off, an nelt darn, an we jumped over him. He has a niced white shirt, just like snow as yev seed. One boy as coodn't jump dropped on the

Supintendunt's nek, an muckied his niced white sleeves with his boots. Then we all had teas fur nothin. I had 5 cups, a lot of bread and butter, 3 slices of plum cake, an 4 kerrin buns. I only seed 7 boys an girls wot got ill. Then the boys an girls had races for niced prizes, bats, and werkboxes, and all sorts of things. Then we all sung a him standin in a ring on the hilside, with the Supintendunt in the middle, an the big red sun neerly touching the ground. Yer woodnt beleeve. I wonder wether Heaven's like that was. The him we sung was—

" 'Tell me the old, old story,
Of Jesus and His love.'

My teacher, who stood next to me, she started cryin a bit, she did. I seed her. I don't no where we shall go next yere. This is a Day in the Country, and it was all so niced."

The next essay is one on "The Dog," by a boy in the third standard of the school.

I have been compelled to punctuate this piece right and left, and still in one or two instances I fail to gather the drift of the lad's meaning. Perhaps the reader will manage to do so better

than I; but I assure you that without the commas and periods I have inserted, the whole essay would be utterly unintelligible to an ordinary reader—in spite of the fact that the spelling is really not so bad.

"THE DOG.

"The dog is the commonest kind of all living brutes. Its legs are four, and one tail of all sizes. Cats are very common in all large towns and streets, but dogs are more so. There is only 3 things wiser than the dog, which is ourselves, all monkeys, and all eliphents. The kinds of dogs is what we say numerous; for how many kinds of cats can you find except house and wild? But dogs are namely, bull-dogs, Newfoundlands, turriers, and other numerous. You may call the colours numerous, except pink, red, and blue. Many people actuelly think as numerous colours is not the best.

"The thing about dogs is that they keep gentlemen's houses safe when they are asleep. Only think how frightened a robber must feel, when, just as he is putting his face to the keyhole, he hears a sharp growl on the other

side of the keyhole. Then the robber runs away quick, for he does not know wether it is a lady's dog, or a bull-dog. When the robber gets home and thinks about it, he thanks the dog in his heart for having tought him a lesson not to commit sin, for it is the 8 commandment.

"When a dog makes for a cat, this poor creature runs away, like as you've seen. If their is a tree, the cat scratters up it, and begins a licking itself on a branch, and the dog can just do nothing else than smell round the bottom of the tree, to see wether it is a holler one. It's never a holler one, and so the dog has to allways go along back. But if there's no trees just round, the dog gets the cat in the corner of a door or two brick walls. Then the cat makes her body twise as big as what is flesh and bone, by standing her hairs up strite, and she spits and sneezes all over the dog, so as he cant see what he's a doing of. Then while he's clearin his eyes a bit, she scratters him in the nose, which, you know, of all parts of the dog's flesh, its nose has got the littlest skin over it. You might say as there was no skin, only a bit of meet. The dog feels just as if he was cought with a

fishing hook, and he runs right away a thinking to hisself as he thought the cat was a little one when he see it in the yard.

"Ladies' dogs is what you see in carriges sitting looking over at you. They have more sense than all other dogs, and get far better victles. They won't eat bread, or anything like that. They have big eyes, and they can sit still longer than other dogs.

"I once read a wonderful tale of a dog which had a sore leg. I forget how it got itself round. The leg was very sore.

"Also about two or three tales of Newfoundlands saving childern from drownding. They were all saved before they had gone down three times, and the Newfoundland was patted. Them's Newfoundlands as you see with their tongues hanging out, bigger than bull-dogs, and bent legs walking soft. If you think they cant swim count of them walking a bit lame, it is not true, for look at them there children. There has never been one boy or girl drownd in this world where Newfoundlands was a walkin round the pond."

CHAPTER XII.

DURING the last decade the question of corporal punishment in elementary schools has caused more anxiety to the masters and mistresses, and has been brought before the public more prominently perhaps than any other. What with the elaborated regulations of School Boards, the glaring animosity of certain magistrates to the School Board system and everything connected with it, and the threatening intrusion of parents, the teacher's life is rendered next to intolerable, whilst his tenure of office has become so unstable that a large proportion of the profession are in a chronic state of perturbation and constantly on the alert for opportunities of forsaking the vocation to which they have devoted themselves.

This state of things is the more to be regretted because it is an indisputable fact that the

elementary schoolmaster has at last made a position for himself. The Metropolitan Board schoolmaster is almost without exception a collegiate, a good mathematician, and a conscientious, scientific inquirer. His instincts and judgment lead him to look upon corporal punishment as a repugnant, but, at the same time, a necessary part of his complicated duties; and he is a staunch opponent to anything approaching excessive chastisement. How often he wishes, indeed, that human nature were not what it is, so that he could fling the rod into the fire, and experience the delight of having to teach a school of ignorant juvenile angels!

Ninety-nine parents out of a hundred object to a teacher punishing a child upon the posterior part, whilst nine out of every ten magistrates declare that this method is the only legitimate one, and week after week they mulct schoolmasters and schoolmistresses in sums varying from £2 to £10 for directing punishment to the hand. Nay, the Bench goes farther, and enunciates that it will fine masters and mistresses for chastising children for offences done out of

school, such as breaking windows, annoying pedestrians, and scribbling immoral sentences on the walls, &c.

I will relate a circumstance that happened in my own school only last February.

I was sitting in the school about a quarter past one, correcting some children's papers in arithmetic ready for the afternoon session, when a rat-tat sounded at the door, and on my "Come in!" there entered a great burly coal-vendor, black with coal-dust from top to toe, and holding his cap respectfully in his hand.

The coal-man asked "Are you the head master, sir?" and on my answering in the affirmative, he said "Look here, sir, what your boys have done!" and at the same time he turned each cheek and the back of his head to me for inspection. Then I saw that bright streams of blood were coursing down face and neck, and making little fountains through the coal dust on all sides of the poor fellow's head.

He then spoke somewhat as follows:—

"That's my horse and van, sir, as you see through the window. Well, sir, I was on the top of my perch (you see what a very high one

it is, sir), and I was a eating my bread and pork while my mare was going slow, when a score or two of your boys started of throwing ice and stones at me. They knew they could easy get away before I could scramble down from my seat, and I tell you, sir, they have given me what's for, and no mistake. The dirty sharp ice was more like lumps of lead, sir, and I feel so dazed that I don't know as I shan't faint afore long."

After sincerely expressing my sympathy for the poor fellow, I said to him "And what have you come to me for?"

"Well, sir," he answered, "I can pick six or seven of them out, and I thought as you might think as they deserved caning."

"So they do," I said, "every one of them, for I am constantly warning my boys against throwing. But as regards caning, I dare do no such thing. Were I to chastise these boys, my man, the chances are that I should have just as many summonses taken out against me before to-morrow noon, and I should be fined heavily for as many assaults. Now, in the first place, *I can't afford it*, really I can't; and in the second

place, cases like yours will serve to teach the public that they are wrenching the rod from the schoolmaster's hands only to throw it into pickle for their own backs. Yours is a comparatively light matter; I can only hope that you and yours may never be the victims of more serious ruffianism."

The poor bleeding fellow knew that I was speaking truth, and, overcome by the pain, or my words, or both, he turned away blubbering like a child.

The practice of parents blackmailing schoolmasters and schoolmistresses is a particularly heinous one. I know an assistant who paid a woman five shillings a week for a considerable time in return for her not carrying out her threat to summon him for giving her boy one stroke behind with the cane.

But I suspect that it is chiefly the ladies who become the prey of parents. A head mistress assures me that it came to her ears that one afternoon three women were heard conversing over their gin in a public-house next door to a Board School in Whitechapel, and one proposed that they should "go to the bloomin' school and

get some more tin from the ladies." My informant could give me no more details, but she firmly believed that this expression must have had reference to intimidation of some or other of the mistresses.

I was led to make the above remarks by the sight of the next exercise in my collection: namely, that of little Isaac Shepherd on "Postmen."

He was a good little lad for aught that I remember to the contrary, but his mother was a vixen of a woman who never visited the schools without smelling strongly of spirits.

On one occasion she came in her usual state and told the assistant before his class that she was going to walk him before the Beak, unless he made it straight with her. The assistant was certain he had never touched little Ikey, but the bitter thought of losing his reputation led him for a moment to betray weakness, and he put his hand in his pocket to give her what silver he had. However, he immediately recovered himself, and determined to adopt a different policy. He went straight to the door, and boldly ordered her out. The foiled virago

then tried all her arts to get him to assault her in putting her out; and failing in this, she went and dragged her boy from the class, amidst the stifled applause of several of the scholars, and then stalked cursing from the room.

Here, then, I give you Isaac Shepherd's essay on

"POSTMEN."

"Nobody could be happy in the world except for the useful gentleman what we call a postman. For how would you no whether those arnts and uncles of yours who live right acrost the fields and rivers was dead, if the gentleman did not bring a henvelope with black all round? You would think they was still alive, and you'd keep all on writing to them. That is why postmen are allis little thin men without beards cuz they have to keep on walking quick all day. They are not dressed up so fine as soldiers cuz they havn't to go and fight acrost the sea. You never see postmen fight, not even with their fists, for they havn't got no time with all those letters to take round. I don't think postmen dare even fight boys, for when me and some

more boys was a looking at a postman unlocking a pillar-box, and one of the boys pushed his head into the hole and we all run away, he wouldn't even run after us, but only told a polleeceman when he came round the corner. And when he came away from the polleeceman he was frightened of walking our way past us, but jumped on a tramway and shammed not to see us. Postmen allis nocks so as to waken babies, and then they tries to look as if they didn't no as baby was behind the door. If the postman doesn't bring your letters, you can summons him, that's why theyre so frightened. Two or three postmen come together without letters at Christmas, and they ask your mothers for a Christmas box. My mother gave them a penny to share amongst them, but some didn't. Many boys become postmen cuz they think it is a good trade. I don't think they get good dinners, same as men who hasn't to dress up. My father has a lot of meat and bread, and he keeps on a eatin. Postmen allis black their boots, cuz they are frightened of being summoned. They are very frightened men, and won't hurt you whatever

you do. Never be cruel to them, for they have to take care of their clothes more than you, and are not so big as they would like. I once seed a postman not dressed up, and he was smokin a pipe, and he put it away when he seed me and the other boys. But we seed him though; and some of the boys called out after him, 'you'll go and get summoned for smokin yer father's pipe, you will.' But he wouldn't turn round, and he puffed the terbacca out again as soon as he got further on. This is all I no about postmen, exept they are very clean men most any time you like to look."

CHAPTER XIII.

A MISTRESS has sent me a clerical effort by one of her little pupils, and I feel sure that those amongst my readers who are mothers, or "grown-up sisters," will peruse it with especial pleasure. However, as a rule, the exercises of girls are not nearly so piquant as those by boys. Girls' exercises are more frequently characterized by earnestness, by a pleasing halo of sympathy, and by plain matter-of-fact perspicacity; and these features are observable to a greater or less extent whatever be the age or standing of the little essayists.

The handwriting of this little girl is really very good, and the whole paper neat and attractive. One little sentence I have decided to withhold.

"THE LIFE OF NOAH.

"When the gentleman called Noah lived, all the people in the world was so full of sins and

marrying, that the land smelt of wickidness and uncleanness. It was so bad that the breath of the smell went up towards Heaven.

"Noah used to actilly stand on heaps of stones to preach to the people, and he told them that if they would not be rightyess, God would send such a heavy shower of rain as would drownd them all and wash away the smell. But they only laught at him, and pushed him off the stones, and hussled the poor man about, just like I've seen people go on at the Salvation Army when they are talkin good things to us under the big blue flag. The people used to stand at the doors of their tents, and boo and hoot at Noah, the same as the Army men and women is laught and whissled at by gentlemen standing at their doors and winders. My father says he is shamed to be called an Inglishman when he sees how the Salvation is knocked about and prossecuted. He says people will hold a drunkin man up, but will knock a Salvation down. Mother says the police is as bad as the uthers, cause they pitend not to see anythink of it.

"Noah was bilding a ark when he wasn't

preaching, and at last it was finished ready for floatin. God then drove annimals of every sort into the ark, and he told Noah to take Shem, Ham, and Jafit into it, and some ladies as well. What a big thing it must have been, when it took a hundred and twenty years to bild it. I have never seen a real ship, but I know the ark was not like our ships, cause it was more like a monster dog kennel with rockers under, but no hole. While Noah was making it, people used to take days' outings from all parts to see it, like as people go now to big London. But those wickid people used to go only to make fun of it, and to eat and drink and get marrid. They actilly had outings to it on the very day as Noah said he was a going in. I wunder whether they felt kweer, when they saw him climbing up the high high ladder, and get in the door at the top. I wunder whether they felt kweer when they heard the door bang, and saw the ladder pulled up? But those poor sinful people who used to laugh at Noah and hussle him about and try to get uther people not to bleeve him, they hadnt time to think now. They hadnt time to laugh agen at him. It

started rainin in torrents as hard as it could, directly the door shut. It was too late to be sorry now, and nearly too late to cry. O too late. All they could do was to run away, and see what to do not to get drownded by the porin rain. It soon got deeper and deeper, and those would be drownded quickest who couldnt get planks and things. Then when the night came, I shouldnt think those on planks would live long. In a week or two I am certin there wouldnt be a single one left alive. Dear me, how dredful that great high box-looking thing must have seemed, floatin about on the water. I think as even the ladies inside must have felt frightened sometimes, speshully when it jerked ; but then they knew that God was with them all the time, and its wonderful what that will do for people the Salvation says. When Noah thought the water might have gone down, he sent a raven out; but it kept away, so the gentleman was as wise as ever. Then he let a dear little dove fly out, and the little thing soon came back with a leaf or two in its mouth. But when he sent it out agen a week after, it didnt come back to the ark agen. So then Noah knew it was

safe for the ladies to get out. How funny must that Ararat Mounting have looked with that big cradle thing on the top, and Noah and his family sittin at the door, and all the annimals skampering away down the hillside, or flying in bunches through the air.

"Noah lived to be 950 years old. How nice. I don't know whether ladies lived as long as gentlemen, but I should think that they did nearly. What a long time to be married. I should like to think that my granmother would live on like that; but it's no use, spite of how much I love her. Dear Granny. O God, you are kind—the Teacher and the Salvation says, kinder than our fathers and mothers, so do let me see dear Granny up in Heaven agen after she is burried. She's quiet as good as those ladies who went into the ark, she is; so you must save my Granny.

"The lesson, I think, we ougt to learn from these things is, to take care that we are living as we know God wishes, and not to jossle and prossecute the Salvation Army, just cause they won't get drunk, and they like to tell about God at all chantses."

I am informed by a mistress that an inspector asked of her scholars the following question in mental arithmetic:—"What is the difference betwixt long and short division?"

The whole class was nonplussed, with the exception of one little item of a child. This little lady turned up her innocent face to the inspector, keeping her hands still behind her, and said meekly and complacently, "Please, Sir, the one is done long, and the other is done short."

"Bravo! my child," say I, (and so, no doubt, thought the inspector)—a girl's reason, for sure, and a woman's, too, for the matter of that. It brings to my mind those words about "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained praise."

Another mistress, whose school is situate in one of the lowest parts of the Metropolis, sends me a very pleasing description of a scene in her school on "Inspection Day."

Her Majesty's Inspector was examining the first class in reading. On each little girl finishing her prescribed paragraph, the inspector further tested her intelligence by putting a question on the meaning of some word or phrase which

occurred in the piece the child had read. The mistress informs me that the inspector had such a pleasant, chatty manner, that she really believes her girls looked forward to and enjoyed his visit. If any child failed to answer a question put by this gentleman, it was not because she was timorous or nervous, but—frankly admits the mistress—because of incapacity, or on account of faultiness or weakness in tuition.

A dear child, called Mary Cooper, had read her allotted piece with such appropriate emphasis and such sympathy of expression, that the inspector said to her, in his kind, sincere manner, "That was really beautiful, my child! And now," he added, "if you can tell me the meaning of that word 'turf,' I shall give you my very best mark."

Meanings of words are mountains of difficulty to some children, and the tears almost started to Mary's eyes, because she realized that the inspector had chanced to drop on a word whose meaning she had not lately studied. Poor child! I wonder how often she had frolicked and tripped over Nature's emerald carpeting? Possibly

never. But Mary had plenty of determination; she felt that her very life almost depended on giving an answer; and she lost no time in exercising her little brain to the utmost for some sort of definition; and just as the inspector was saying, "Well, never mind, child, I will pass on," she eagerly exclaimed, "Turf, Sir, is grass and clean dirt stuck together by God."

"A most excellent definition," said the inspector; "in fact, the answer I looked for was not nearly so precise as that. You have gained my highest mark."

Reader, to the child who sees the sweeping uplands every week of its life, the question would have presented no difficulty; but to dear little Mary Cooper the effort was similar in character—yea, and as difficult in degree—as the mental exertion experienced by a Grammar-School lad whilst construeing some racy verse from Horace into homely English prose. The dead language and its idiom could not be more vague and unfamiliar to the lad than was the original of the term "turf" to little Mary Cooper.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE paper before me by William Kempson on "Seamen and the Sea," amusing as it is in itself, at once calls up recollections of a career, the outlines of which are very typical of some of the darker walks of life in this our "Modern Babylon."

However, I will give the exercise first, and, afterwards, I will relate what I know in connection with the lad's history.

"SEAMEN AND THE SEA.

"Seaman are what we call sailors, and captins, and training ship boys. The sailors you see in the streets are nice little fat men, with red and brown faces. They ware boy's coats and hats, and their trousers are too tite for them up above, and too wide for them down below. It makes them feel very riled. Sailors don't ware collers,

becose their necks are so thick; and they allways have their boots blacked for fear the captin might meet them round a corner. They don't carry their best close in boxes, but they ty them up in big red and blue handkerchers just like Christmas puddens. Sailors are very fond of their mothers and sisters, and you neerly allways see them taking them out for a walk. The reason why sailors like to get drunk is becose it makes them roll about like as if they was on the ocheant.

"You think as the sea is bigger than what it looks. I have seed it once, and I wouldn't beleeve that it was the ocheant, till the teacher told me that it was. It was when our school went from Waterloo to Portsmouth, and nothing to pay only a shilling. Just afore I started from home that morning, my mother said to me while she was brushin me up niced, 'Billy, you'll see the waves jump mountins high, if it only blows a bit.' Then I said to her, 'Have you ever seed it give a jump mother?' and she said 'No, Billy, I've never seed the sea, nor never shall; but I've heerd on it, Billy.' So when the teacher told me that flat piece of green

water was the ocheant, I felt as If I'd just come all for nothin. I looked at it till I was neerly sick, and I should have set down and done a good cry, only I had to keep follerin of the teacher, so I hadn't got time. At last I felt so riled that I went up and cote hold of the teacher's coat, and I said 'Please, sir, can you make it jump a bit?' But he only laught, and told me what a funny boy I was. I do beleeve he thought I was a kiddin him. But I wasn't a kiddin him at all. I only wanted to see the ocheant a carryin on same as my mother told me it did.

"A lot of the boys got some of the ocheant up in their hands, and drunk it. You should have seed them spit it out like lightnin. I wouldn't touch none of the ocheant, I was so riled.

"The ships are very niced to look at, but them with sails on scarsely go at all. Why, they didn't go half as quick as my boat goes down the street when its been raining. I think they build them a lot too hevvy. Them paddlin steamers is the ones for goin. They just begin to puff a bit first, then the paddles go

splashin round like mad, and off they start as if they was going all round the world. I just tell you strait, if it hadn't have been for them steamers I shouldn't have injoyed myself a bit, barrin the meat tea. Them steamers without paddles go quick too, but they don't make half such a loud noise.

"The teacher took all the boys in a big steamer that was going to start the next week to cross the sea. There was some nasty dirty men doin all sorts of queer things. Some was having a game throwing buckets of water all over the ship. Others of them kept a popping down a dark hole, and then they'd come up agen laughin. Some was flinging ropes about as if they was silly, and two of them was a walking about here and there with a paint pot, and kept touching one place and then another, but they couldn't make up their minds to stop for long anywheres. So I askt the teacher what all them funny mucky men was; and he said 'Why, they're sailors, William, reeal sailors; and very hard at work the poor fellers are.' Well, I'm sure as teacher wouldn't go and tell a story, but if anybody else had have told me that, I wouldn't

have beleeved it. It made me reglar riled, it did. There's a nasty smell about ships, something like what our school smells on a hot day when all the boys are standin together in our room singing, only its a bit funnier. You feel as if you want to be ill, but it won't let you. The teacher said it once let him be ill, and then he felt better. Sailors never get ill when they are on the ocheant, becose they know how to put their legs when they are a walking.

"My mother dosen't want me to be a sailor. She says that if ever I go for a sailor, she'll die while I'm away. I can't make out why it is that your mothers never want you to go for sailors. It does rile me so. I do beleeve I should go if it wasn't for her. I know a boy that got to be a sailor, all from stealin some black pudden. Instead of sending him to prison, they put him on a Training ship, and now he dresses in niced sailors' close, and is a lot fatter than me. I'd go and steal some black pudden if it wasn't a sin. Its no good of stealin bits of sugar and little things like that, becose they only box your ears for it, and never think of making you sailors. It does rile me so. Sugar

just as good as black pudden, so why can't they send you to the Training ship for stealin it.

"I sometimes draw ships and then colour them yeller and blue with my penny box of pints. I can draw steamers best, becose you don't to draw no sails, but only two black lines for funnils, and its so niced and easy to draw the smoke a comin out. You just twirl your pencil round and round, and its done right. Before I had the ocheant I used to make fishes swimming round the steamer; but I don't now, becose never seed one single fish swimming round the steamers at Portsmouth, much less chivyin one another. It makes me riled to have to leave them out, but what's the good of putting them in if they're not there. The lesson what you learn is, allways to be kind to sailors, and not to say as the sea can jump as high as the clouds, when it can only just shift about like shavins."

And now for a few words in connection with the career of the writer of the above essay.

This lad, William Kempson, possessed one of the most vicious tempers that ever I have had to deal with.

On several occasions he did serious bodily harm to one or more of his school-fellows. One poor lad he injured for life, by throwing a stone at him which cut the little fellow's right eye open. In addition to the loss of one of his eyes, this innocent victim of Kempson's ungovernable temper received such a shock to the nervous system, that he became totally unfitted for life's ordinary calls and duties, and he is a helpless burden to his poor parents to this day.

I remember that I once called Kempson out in front of the class for some gross misdemeanour. The lad was then nearly thirteen years of age. On his stepping out in obedience to my order, I noticed him fumbling in his pocket, but I did not attach any significance to the action. When he was near me, I placed my hand gently on his shoulder, and I was about to give him a serious talking to, when, with a sudden, startling movement, he drew a pistol from his pocket, and sensationally presented it full up at my face. "Touch me, if ——," but before he could say or do any more, I had wrenched the weapon from him with my left hand, whilst I gripped him firmly with my right. He then struggled like a

little maniac to recover the pistol, but, although I am by no means a strong man, I not only succeeded in keeping him pretty well at arm's length, but also found time to collect my thoughts as to what was the best course to take with him. I decided to put him bodily out of school, and then write a note to the parents acquainting them with the circumstances. I got the young monster out of doors in spite of all his desperate kicks and frantic struggles; and on my return to the class-room a stone came crashing through the window and fell near the desk. Well, I never minded that, but at once examined the pistol in my hand.

I found that it was a veritable revolver, although of a very cheap make, and unloaded. Meanwhile, with the exception of three or four of the more unruly spirits, the lads had sat silent and over-awed during the whole of the scene; and when they saw me sit down feebly at my table, and bury my ashy pale features in my hands, I believe the little lookers on really sympathised with their master.

I wrote a note to the parents, and the next morning I received the following reply from

Kempson's father, scrawled on a dirty piece of paper, and brought by the lad's sister, a girl some fourteen or fifteen years old.

26, ——St.

"SKOOLMASTER,

You send back that pistil of mine by barer, or youl no whot for. Bill won't cum no more to your skool, and the Board be d——d. Thank yer stars yer didn't kane him.

Yoors, Sir,

Mr. Kempson."

And so ended William Kempson's school days.

The next I saw of him was some six or seven years after. I had been in the neighbourhood of Hampton and Thames Ditton for the day, making sketches, and on returning to the station in the evening I caught an up train just moving out. I hurried into the nearest carriage, and thought myself fortunate, for I had an important engagement in town later on.

However, I found I had seated myself amidst a roystering set of turf men. The compartment was charged with tobacco smoke and reeking

with the smell of spirits; but this was nothing as compared with the foul language I heard on all sides of me:—turf arcana, blackguards' horse-play, ribald anecdotes, &c., and all intermingled with frequent and repulsive oaths.

I pulled out my little sketch book, turned over the leaves, and tried to seem indifferent. But I soon felt that one man who sat opposite me, had ceased to join in the conversation, and was eyeing me attentively from under his smoke wreaths. At last I was startled to hear him address me thus, "I say, schoolmaster, you'll remember Will Kempson, I know!"

I raised my eyes, and there Kempson was before me, a big, bloated, rakishly-dressed man, who looked at least thirty or thirty-five, although he could only have just been out of his teens. Villainy and deceit were stamped as clearly on his features, as if his face had been an open book to me.

I answered curtly "I will take your word for it that you bear such a name," and with this I turned my eyes from him with disgust, and resumed my attention to my book. With the utmost effrontery he then nudged his knees

against mine by way of reminding me of his presence (a common trick with these men), and said "Look here (winking), if you do anything in that line (pointing to my book), I can always do a bit of business with you."

The fellow—what with his half-drunken condition and the denseness of smoke—had evidently mistaken my little sketch-book for some betting records. A bullying, undershot, thick-set man to my left, belching with liquor, thrust his head right athwart my shoulder, and glanced rudely at my book, almost getting hold of it with his frouzy fingers. As soon as he discovered its contents, he burst into a horrible guffaw, and blurted sneeringly at Kempson "Why you silly idiot, they're nothing but b—— drawrins."

Kempson then leaned forward, looked contemptuously at the page for a moment, and then vented out a most foul and insulting epithet, spitting down, at the same time, (intentionally I believe), on my boots. He next turned to his companions, and addressed them in a running undertone, but I could have no doubt whatever from his occasional gestures and from his

listeners' coarse merriment and their vulgar glances in my direction, that the hardened young sinner was relating to them the pistol episode;—and that, no doubt, with additions.

I can scarcely express how relieved I was when the train pulled up. I changed carriages with alacrity, and this was the last I ever saw or heard of the writer of "Seamen and the Sea."

CHAPTER XV.

ONE of the most interesting lads that ever passed through my school was little Johnny Slinn. I disguise the name in this case, as Slinn is now a rising young comedian on the London boards.

Johnny's powers of mimicry, even as a schoolboy, were, indeed, wonderful. A favourite pastime with him was to gather a semi-circle of boys round him, and then defy them to "hold their faces without laughing," whilst he contorted his features into all kinds of grotesque expressions and shapes.

The little band of subjects would endeavour to fortify themselves against the embryo actor's cajoleries, by pursing up their features, biting their lips till they almost bled, or essaying to fix their thoughts on extraneous things. But it was all of no avail. Before Johnny had subjected

them for one short minute to his facial pantomime, they all would be compelled, one after the other, to relax their features, and break into uncontrollable laughter.

Johnny generally commenced operations with his victims by grinning savagely at them for a second or two, and then suddenly bursting into a most comical giggle. This preliminary farce itself ordinarily cleared off about half of them, and these were instantly pulled out of the row by Johnny's "manager," and put by themselves against the wall. Johnny would then resume his attack upon the others, by projecting out his lower jaw bull-dog fashion, rolling his eyes like a ghoul, making his nose play up and down like a nibbling rabbit, causing his forehead to twitch like automatic parchment, and all the time giving vent to the most mirth-provoking sounds. One or other of these appeals proved irresistible to the risibility of his onlookers, and in quick succession they were summarily summoned by Johnny's "manager" to fall back, till the whole semi-circle had vanished.

I once caught Johnny entertaining pretty well a whole class by imitating myself. It happened

that just as the lads were about being dismissed after the morning session, I was called away for a moment or two to attend to a visitor. But this was time enough for Johnny to go through a little performance; for, on my suddenly returning by another entrance, there was the little imp with my silk hat on his head, an eye-glass (one of his own) stuck above his cheek, and my walking stick under his arm, whilst he was perambulating round the room with the exact gait peculiar to myself, and now and again pretending to gingerly remove bits of orange peel out of his path by a whisk of the stick. As soon as he gathered—from the sudden cessation of laughter—that I had returned to the room, the young rascal instantly whipped my hat off his head, slipped the glass into his mouth, and demurely walked up to me, saying, "Please, Sir, I was a holding them for you while you came back."

A year or two after Johnny Slinn left school, there was a "windfall" in the family. Johnny's uncle (on the mother's side) returned from Australia a fairly wealthy man, and he generously transferred a part of his fortune to his sister and her husband.

Young Slinn was placed in a city merchant's office. However, although he was thoroughly steady and attentive to business, he still entertained a strong desire to go upon the stage. He joined an Amateur Theatrical Society, and soon became its choicest low comedian. Before he was eighteen he got an engagement in Scotland with a good touring company, and after two or three years' provincial work, he succeeded in getting a footing on London boards. At the present moment, I can safely say, I know of no low comedy actor of Slinn's age who is such a favourite with the London theatre-going public; and I venture to prophesy that he is destined to step into the very front rank of comedians. As regards means, he is quite independent of his profession, for, at his uncle's death, he came into a little fortune of £7,000.

John Slinn is the only pupil of mine who afterwards became a close friend; for, although he is fourteen years my junior, we are genuine intimates. I like him as much for his kindly and exuberant disposition as I admire him for his marvellous genius; and he has attached himself to me—well, really, I don't know

what for, now I come to think, for I can do nothing except give a fairly good recitation. However, I am certain that Slinn is one of the "true-till-death" fibre, and I believe he would say as much for the schoolmaster.

I will just relate one more anecdote of him, and then give you his juvenile effort, entitled, "Bank Holiday."

Some months ago, he and I and a few friends of "*the* profession" were sitting in Slinn's club after the play. Whilst we were lounging on a settee, the pitiful mewing of a cat or kitten reached our ears. The sounds proceeded from a large, unlighted room, the door of which was just before us. The mewings were so excruciatingly painful that we could not but conclude that the creature was in some kind of feline agony. I always was foolishly sensitive, so—closing my Terence, which I was quietly perusing—I told my companions that I could stand it no longer, but that I should go into the gloomy precincts and see what the matter was. Slinn said, "Don't bother, old man, it's only that deuced cook's cat's kitten; it's always getting its tail or one of its legs fast in somewhere."

However, I persisted in going to the rescue. I struck a match, and, guided by the plaintive mews, I made my way to the remote end of the room. As I could see nothing, I knelt down, and peered under the seats. When I did so, an explosive burst of laughter broke upon my ears, and I instantly realized that I had been terribly victimized by Slinn's powers of mimicry.

I was so abashed that, on returning to the gas-light of the room I had left, I did not know where to turn my eyes. There my friends were pretty well choking themselves with laughter. But where was Slinn? I looked round. The irrepressible fellow had placed himself on a high stool in the exact position of a school-boy about to receive a flogging with the birch! "Please, Sir, it wasn't me; I'm sure it wasn't me!" he yelled out, ludicrously clinging to the legs of the stool with his hands, and violently kicking out his heels behind in the air. Out I burst into a hearty laugh; and, as I dropped down into a seat, fairly holding my sides, Slinn came forward and said to one of the company, "Now, then, you can order the glasses to be filled, for you can't deny that he went through the performance

exactly to the letter!" And so I had been the subject of a friendly wager; and that rogue Slinn, knowing my temperament, and confident in his own powers, had actually forecast the monodrama for me.

And now I transcribe Johnny Slinn's school effusion. Here and there I have modified the punctuation; but, apart from that, I give the essay exactly as I find it.

"BANK HOLIDAY.

"They call this happy day Bank holiday, becose the Banks shut up shop, so as people cant put their money in, but has to spend it. People begin talking about Bank holiday a long time afore it comes, but they don't begin to spree about much till the night afore. Bank holidays are the happiest days of all your life, becose you can do nearly what you like, and the perlice don't take no notice of you. You can go into fields, and make your horses and donkeys go quick, and shout all about as hard as you like, and larf at people, and dress up in all different colours with guys on your faces, and you can do everythink but steal and brake

winders. Never steal or brake winders, for it is written in the Bible.

"Theres only one thing as spoils Bank holiday, and that is not being fine and hot. When it's wet all the gentlemen get savige, and fight one another, and pull their sweetarts and missises about. I'm very sorry for them all round, becose it is a shame for to see. But when it's fine and hot, the gentlemen all larf and are kind, and the women dance about and drink beer like the gentlemen. Everybody's right, and boys don't get skittled round.

"Last Bank holiday was a regular good one. The man called Mr. Binn as lives four doors from us has a little horse and barrow cart, becose he goes about selling green stuff. My father, who is a shoe mender, did all their childern's boots just for nothin at all the week afore, so Mr. Binn told my father that him and mother and baby and me could all go with him in his carrige to Box Hill on the Monday. My father said the green-stuff man got the best of the bargain, becose he soled the childern's boots very thick, besides putting some new lastiks in the missis's. When the cart came round, besides

Mr. and Mrs. Binn and the childern, there was that young man and his sweetart as both works at the blackin factery. They call him Currunts, I don't know why; just same as they call my father Tachinends. Mr. Binn is a big strong man with a ruff voice, so they daresnt call him anythink, but they call his pony Beens. Mr. Binn called out from the carrige, 'Now, Tachinends, sharp's the word.' Then we all walked out, and got in. We had to sit all very close together, and there wasnt room for one more. Mr. Binn then said, 'Are you all right behind?' and Currunts answered 'Right you are, Guvnor, no more for Box Hill this time!' and then Mr. Binn let the pony go its fastest over the stones. Currunts kept lifting his hat and yellin to different folks in the street as he knowd, but our baby begun crying as loud as it could becose of the bumping up and down. At last we got to parts of London where Currunts didn't know people; the roads got yellerer, and the houses werent so black and high.

"When we got to Merton there was more fields than houses, and the sun began to shine nice and hot, which stopped our baby crying.

There was a publik-house standing at the corner of two roads, and Currunts said, 'I vote as we have our first licker up here,' and my father said, 'Not yet;' but Mr. Binn said, 'So we will, Currunts, and you shall stand.' I think my father is rather frightened of Mr. Binn, becose Mr. Binn allways does what he likes. So Mr. Binn pulled Beens up, and the gentlemen got out. The growd-up people had beer, and the childern had cherry brandy mixt with water.

"It was such a nice ride after that. There was big trees on both sides of the road nearly all the way, and bewtiful fields right away wherever you looked. The houses was just nowhere. But when we got nearly to Box Hill I never seed anythink like it. It seemed as if the road was sinking down in the middle of the fields, and the fields seemed as if they was a rising up to the clouds. You never seed anythink so pretty in all your life. Box Hill is the prettyest of all, and it was just at the bottom of it that Mr. Binn said, 'Wo, Beens! All change for Box Hill,' and the pony stopped, and we all got out.

"After a bit, we had our dinner sitting on the

grass. Dinners taste nicer at Box Hill than they do at home. We just had as much as we liked to eat, and then there was plenty left for tea and supper. Baby never cried at all, but tumbled about on the grass, and looked at the white ducks and hens, and listened to the roundabout orgins. Father wanted to go to the top of the Hill, but Mr. Binn said, 'Not me; it's good enough here!' so we didn't go. Currunts and his sweetart went walking away by theirselves, and he had his arm round her neck, and she had hers round his cote tails. Lots of people kept coming all day till it was regular jolly. After tea the yung gentlemen and their sweetarts played at kissin in the ring. I never seed so many kisses in my life. Currunts made them all larf by allways lifting the girls' chins up and kissin them down the neck. When it was getting dark my father said he wanted to play at it with them, but Mr. Binn said he wouldnt take him back home if he did. Then my mother said, 'That's right, Mr. Binn,' and Mr. Binn said, 'I'll look after him, Missis.'

"When it got late, my mother and Mrs. Binn and the childern got in the cart, and sat talking

while the gentlemen went inside the house and drank beer. At last we all started home, and it felt so nice and queer riding in the dark. There was a bewtiful big moon right before us, and I could see Mr. Binn's head keep bobbin in the middle of it while he was driving. Mother told me after, that I went to sleep at a place called Letherhead, and never woke up till we was home. Next morning I was so sorry it was over, you don't know."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE boy who wrote the following two essays on "Truthfulness" and "Music," was one of those little scholars who give the teacher next to no trouble. He used to sit in his class quiet and passive, and during play he preferred to "look on" or "see all's fair," rather than engage actively in any pastime.

I cannot speak with certainty, but I have got some notion that this lad is dead. He left the school before he was turned twelve, on account of his father losing his situation, and having to accept work in some distant part of the Metropolis. The lad had very poor health, and, in consequence, the teachers dealt with him very tenderly and leniently.

I do not remember that he was particularly bright in any of the subjects taught in the

school, although I should by no means include him among the dunces. His spelling was always very fair.

He was a most thoughtful lad in many ways. I have often seen him escort a "new boy" about the play-ground during recreation time, until he succeeded in getting him included in some one or other of the children's games. He was never amongst the lads who "make a rush" for the open air directly after dismissal; but he used to walk quietly out of the school and into the street as if he utterly failed to see any necessity for exuberant haste.

Here is the lad's essay on

"TRUTHFULNESS."

"All story-tellers, what they call fibbers, are guilty. They know that they have done what is wrong, and so they can't look you in the face. That is how you find them out. It says in the Bible as all liars shant go to Heaven. There was that apossle Peter, that was told by God to strike Anninius and Siphireh down dead for saying as theyd given him all the money for the

stuff theyd sold, and behold they was telling a lie, and dropped down dead, and was buried before morning. What lessons everybody should learn from this. Why couldn't they have given the apossle Peter every penny they'd got that day, then perhaps he might have given them thrippence or perhaps fourpence back. But what did they get? Nothing but just dying right out, and noboddy sorry all round. Never say—

"'You see my finger,
Is it wet, is it dry,
I'll cut my throat
Afore I lie,"

if you're not sure as you're not telling them, or you might drop down dead without your tea, and everyboddy at home crying for you not coming to it. I only say it when I know as its Truthfulness; for if its Truthfulness, you can keep on saying it, also dancing.

"There was that little Amerikan boy, as they used to call Washinton, just because he would'nt play with bad boys, and always used to say to his mother when she asked him about cherry trees and things, 'Mother, I can't tell you a lie,' and scarstly ever got any canings, only talkings

to. His real name was George, and he had more Truthfulness than nearly every other boy in that there place where he lived. Everyboddy knows about him nearly, except them as is always telling stories to get things. This is one of the best lessons you learn.

"I once told a story which was a lie, about not making our baby cry out, which I did with sucking only a little bit of her toffy. And my father pulled my hair more than boys pull, which if I'd said I'd done it, I should have got clean off for Truthfulness. But I tell you, I never thought of it with baby crying so, and my father coming from behind.

"Noboddy likes boys as tell stories. There is two or three boys in our class tell them, and they are nearly always found out. The police can't touch you for it, but the thing is, what you'll get when you die. They're all wrote down in a book with all your whispring. The more stories you tell, you'll only get more for it. There is no more about Truthfulness, except a line or two, perhaps more."

Next, I give the lad's exercise on "Music," written five months later:—

"MUSIC.

"Music is of two kinds, what you sing and what you play. To sing music is far cheaper and easyer than to play it. At school you can only learn to sing it. I am one of them boys as makes a croaky sort of noise when I sing, and so the teacher tells me and some other croaky boys that when the class is singing we must only listen and not sing. The teacher once told me I should make a good base singer. The reason why my voice is croaky is because my mother gives me so much cod-liver oil from the hospital. I like listening just as well as singing, because, while the boys are singing, if you keep putting your finger in and out of your ears sharp and quick, the singing sounds just like a concerteener or kordiun playing.

"There is many instrerments what you play: the banjo, the kornit, the pianer, the street orgin, and others. The pianer is the hardest to learn, and the street orgin the easyest.

"To play the street orgin, you've only got to turn a handle, and a tune comes out. When you want to play another tune, you just shift a

bit of tin at the side of the handle, that's all. But you can't play as many tunes as you like, only about six. That's why the orgin man has to keep moving on, or else people would get sick of him.

"My brother plays the concerteener, and he says as its very hard to learn. My mother says as my brother is very good because he stops in and plays the concerteener, insted of spending his money in the public-houses. Him and some more young men sometimes takes a walk into the country, and plays their teeners as they go along. My mother says that though my big brother only herns half father's wages, that he gives her more money to buy things with than father does. My father can't play a concerteener, but can only make hats.

"I have never seen a pianer only in shops. They cost a great deal of money, pounds and pounds.

"One of my brother's mates plays the kornit. He learnt to play it at the institute, and he only had to pay tuppence a week he says. He keeps it in a nice green bag, and I heerd him tell my mother as it was his baby, and that it never cryd

except when he pinched it. Then my mother laughed, and told him as it was better than getting marryd, and he said, 'Trust me for getting marryd, missis, till I can count 30.'

"It is only them niggers as plays banjos. Playing music on banjos is nearly as cheap and easy as singing it. Banjos always look dirty, and they can't only make a funny noise.

"My brother is saving up all he can to buy a harmonium, and he says he means to have one by next Christmas. What a nice house ours will be when we have a harmonium under the parler clock. We shall move the little table into the kitchen as stands there now."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN every school there is generally one boy who so conspicuously excels his schoolfellows in one or other of the showy subjects of the curriculum, that he becomes the acknowledged "head of the school" as regards that particular department of study. By showy subjects I refer to such branches as recitation, music, and the various "specific" courses.

The master is sometimes tempted to trot out such a pupil before visitors, in order that the lad may display his special ability.

At any rate the pupil soon recognises his own superiority, and I have frequently remarked with regret how soon he gives himself airs of conceit, and assumes a dictatorial and authoritative manner of speaking and acting.

So flagrant are these facts, that even inspectors—whose intercourse with the children is

comparatively limited and remote—do not fail to observe it, and, from time to time, they justly take occasion in their reports to remark upon it in very strong and condemnatory terms.

In the exercise of Francis Crewt upon "Perseverance," which I shall give shortly, the reader can scarcely fail to perceive this unpleasing characteristic. This lad, as a reader of music, was really a prodigy. In the metropolitan and provincial Board schools the Tonic Sol-fa system of notation is the one almost universally adopted; and, I may remark, that before a child leaves school he possesses, as a rule, a very fair acquaintance with sight-singing.

Well, you could put before Francis Crewt the most difficult piece you liked, and, after a quick glance or two from leaf to leaf along the measures or bars, he would turn back to the front page, pull himself together, fix his large blue eyes earnestly upon the music, and sing straight through it with ease and confidence in correct tune, and time, and expression.

At the Government examination the inspector was so struck with his remarkable aptitude in the "ear tests," that he called him out in front

of the class, and just to see how far the lad's ear for music would really permit him to go, he sang a particularly difficult chant using nothing but the syllable *la*. He then asked the boy if he could write down on a slip of paper the correct musical notes of the chant. This Crewt did immediately, not only giving all the notes with exactness, but also accurately dividing them according to time. The inspector was simply amazed, and, I remember, he placed his hands on the scholar's shoulders, and said to him kindly and impressively, "My boy, I hope you will try to be as good as you are clever."

Well, reader, I have related to you how a few of my boys have made their little mark in the world, and also how some have died early in life; whilst, I sincerely trust, the great bulk of my scholars have become good, honest, industrious working men. And now it is with the utmost pain that I briefly chronicle a startling exception in the clever little Francis Crewt. He is now twenty-five years of age, and at the beginning of the present year he was sentenced at the county assizes to a term of seven years penal servitude for being the principal accomplice in a gigantic swindle in the north of England which not only rendered rich men poor, but also scattered the life-savings of scores of work-a-day men and women to the winds.

He began at school, this career of deceit; although it was not till the very last day—nay the very last hour—of his school life that I discovered the lad's real character.

Crewt had applied for and had all but obtained a position as a barrister's office-boy, or rather, it appeared to me, he was to be the joint property of *two* of these gentlemen whose chambers were on the same floor in the Temple. One of these young men had written a note asking me to kindly furnish the applicant, Francis Crewt—who, he understood, was a pupil in my school—with a testimonial as to character. He was quite satisfied, he assured me, as regarded ability, and he concluded by pointing out what a grand opening it was for the lad, &c., &c., and that duties could be commenced in the morning.

I called Crewt to my desk, and for five or ten minutes I said all I could to encourage my pupil, and also to fortify his principles. I

patted his head, and told him to return to my desk at half-past four when I would have the testimonial ready for him. At closing time he came again to me, and I handed him his testimonial; and once more, in the stillness of the empty schoolroom (for only the teachers were present), I exhorted the lad to cling to the right and the true.

He was apparently much moved, and, on turning away, he pulled out his handkerchief to place to his eyes, and at the same time there dropped from his pocket something glittering to the ground! It was a silver pencil-case. His teacher, who was standing by, at once exclaimed "Why, why, that is mine!"

Reader, the rest of the scene was so painful to me, that I will ask you to permit me to refrain from describing it. I can only add that before Crewt left the room it was known beyond the shadow of a doubt that this theft of the pencil-case was only the last of a long series of petty pilferings, the agent of which it had baffled all my ingenuity to discover. The peg-tops, the balls, and numerous other little articles which had from time to time been stolen;—the

boys' dinners that occasionally had been surreptitiously removed and consumed;—the valuables that one or other of the masters had missed from their rooms in the most mysterious manner;—all these offences had been perpetrated by this guilty, guilty lad.

The parents, who, at my request, came the following day to see me, wept bitter tears of sorrow in my private room over their son's shame and delinquency. Anguish such as theirs may I never witness again!

One thing particularly struck me about the mother. She appeared to fear her son;—to stand in awe of this thirteen-year-old boy! and, although her grief was as keen and pronounced as the father's, (nay, I think it was more so), still I could not but receive the impression that she herself had had previous cause for thinking her boy dishonest. Could it be, I thought, that she had found her son out from time to time in falsehood or theft at home, and had failed to chastise him, or, at least, report the facts to her husband? If so, O how terrible her punishment! For it was now too late, and she knew it.

Nowadays, lads of thirteen do not brook

chastisement from a mother, and I frequently overhear boys aver to one another that they can "nearly fight the guvnor." So Francis Crewt, being now thirteen, and the son of working people, must go from bad to worse; and, as you are aware, reader, he did. However, all I know of his career is told almost in a word. At about sixteen years of age he was a stockbroker's clerk, and at twenty-one or two he had already opened offices in one of the large cloth towns of Yorkshire as an accountant and general agent. Then, a few years later came that cruel financial fraud which so shocked and startled the good north country people at the time, and Francis Crewt is now a convict at Dartmoor.

I remark that in the school exercise of Francis Crewt—namely, an essay on "Perseverance"—there is a simpering vein of conceit which is as displeasing as it is ridiculous. As regards the orthography, there is not a single word spelt wrong throughout, and the writing, although not as good as several of my specimens, is fluent and decided. But the didactive inclination of the juvenile writer, and the false similes and conclusions he makes, will, I think,

recall to my readers that "A little learning is a dangerous thing."

"PERSEVERANCE, OR, TRY AGAIN.

"Many people in this world think too little of perseverance. They despise it because it is a long word. But these foolish people should remember that you can say it in two easy words, which is 'Try Again.' Now if after that these obstinate men and women despise perseverance they deserve to be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law. And that is something awful, let me tell you. But nobody will pity them, and when such foolish people die, how can they expect that any one will go to their funeral? Nobody would think of going except just two or three, for nearly everyone would say 'Let him be buried with the utmost rigour of the law.' I will now tell all people that perseverance is as easy as easy. There's nothing in it, never mind it being a long word. It only means, keep on trying and trying till you've done it. There now, what do you think! Let me tell you people what a persevering poet once wrote. It was this

If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try again.

This poet, I tell you, people, wrote that word 'Try,' three times over because he knew very well that the third time would pay for all. Suppose, people, you wanted to do some difficult thing, say, make a horse go on that's stupid, and stands still and kicks out. Now is your time to get perseverance. Don't flog it with a whip or punch it on the nose or kick it under the belly. That is not perseverance, but cruelty, people. Just pat it and gee to it nicely, and draw it gently forwards, and it will soon find out that you have got perseverance, and it will begin to go as hard as you like. There, didn't I tell you so. Or suppose a boy wants to have a bite of an apple that a stingy mean boy has got. He can get a bite if he will only get perseverance first. Asking the stingy boy straight off for it isn't perseverance, and you wouldn't get a bite. Just walk by the side of him, and show him all the things you've got in your pocket; then put your arm around his shoulder as you are walking on, and tell him you like walking with him better than playing about. Then, when you see he has

nearly finished it, ask him whether it is sweet or sour, and you will find he will hand you over all he has left. There, didn't I tell you! So perseverance you see, people, is much more important than quarrelling one with another. When first I began to write my composition I scarcely used to get any marks from my teacher, because I did them so badly. So I got perseverance, and tried my very best every fresh lesson, and now my kind teacher sometimes gives me very high marks. Think of King Bruce and the spider that actually wriggled up again to its hole in the roof, after falling clean down to the floor nine times. Would you let poets and spiders have perseverance, people, and you not have it? I tell you its as easy as easy, never mind how long; and so I say try and try and try, till you can say to everybody that you have got it inside your hearts."