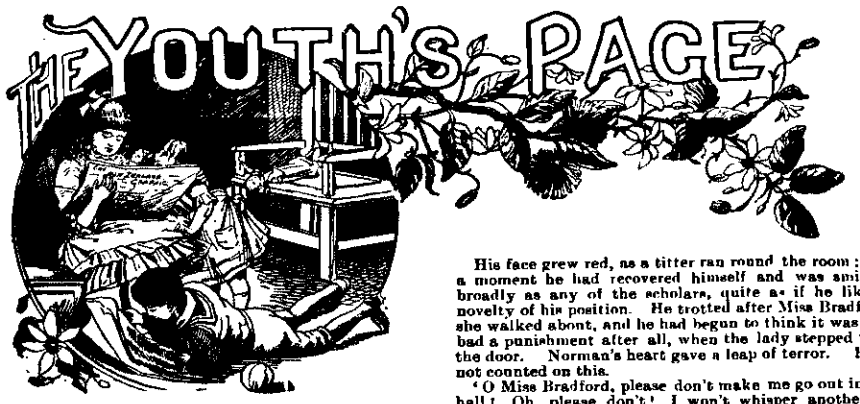

THE DANCING BEAR.

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE.

Oh, it's fiddle-de-dum and fiddle-de dee,
The dancing bear ran away with me;
For the organ grinder he came to town
With a jolly old bear in a coat of brown.
And the funny old chap joined hands with me,
While I cut a caper and so did he.
Then 'twas fiddle-de-dum and fiddle-de-dee,
I looked at him, and he winked at me,
And I whispered a word in his shaggy ear,
And I said, 'I will go with you, my dear.'

Then the dancing bear he smiled and said,
Well, he didn't say much, but he nodded his head
As the organ-grinder began to play
'Over the hills and far away.'
With a fiddle-de-dum and a fiddle-de-dee;
Oh, I looked at him and he winked at me,
And my heart was light and the day was fair,
And away I went with the dancing bear.

Oh, 'tis fiddle-de-dum and fiddle de-dee,
The dancing bear came back with me;
For the sugar plum trees were stripped and bare,
And we couldn't find cookies anywhere.
And the solemn old fellow he sighed and said,
Well, he didn't say much, but shook his head,
While I looked at him and he blinked at me
Till I shed a tear and so did he;
And both of us thought of our supper that lay
Over the hills and far away.
Then the dancing bear he took my hand,
And we hurried away through the twilight land;
And 'twas fiddle-de-dum and fiddle-de-dee
When the dancing bear came back with me.

AN APRON-STRING BOY.

'COME up to the post-office with us!' called out Norman. 'I've got to mail a letter for father.'

The speaker and his sister stopped at the gate, while Ralph Preston walked down from the verandah.

'I can't go to night,' said Ralph. 'Mother has gone out, and left the house with me.'

'Guess the house won't run away!' laughed Norman.

'No,' returned the other, 'but mother expects me to be here.'

'Oh, I wouldn't be tied to my mother's apron-string!' sneered Norman. Come on, Grace.'

'How can you be so rude?' said the girl, as Ralph's face flushed.

'I don't care!' said Norman, turning away with a whistle.

Ralph Preston was two years older than Norman White, and the close comrade of his brother Frank. Norman had been foolish enough to think he might make Frank jealous by going home and telling him that Ralph had been up town with them, and he had been a little nettled by Ralph's refusal. It was nearly dark when Grace and Norman passed Ralph's house on their way home, but they could see the boy sitting alone on the verandah.

'You are an apron-string boy, you are!' was Norman's salutation.

'I think you are mean to talk so; I am ashamed of you!' said Grace.

Her brother laughed.

Norman had not learned much wisdom in his eleven years, as was shown by his remark when he reached home.

'I have found out something about your paragon of a friend,' he said to Frank, who was working over his algebra under the study-lamp.

'What?' said Frank, eagerly.

'Well, said Norman, slowly, enjoying his brother's show of interest, 'I have found out that he is a regular apron-string boy.'

'Pshaw!' returned Frank, a bit indignantly. 'Look out what you say against him; he is the best fellow in town!' and he resumed his study, while Norman went off laughing.

One day, a week afterward, Norman's teacher, Miss Bradford, found him whispering on her return to the school-room after an absence of a few minutes.

'That is the fifth time you have communicated this afternoon,' she said. 'I am sorry I cannot trust you. You may come to the desk.'

The boy stepped lightly to Miss Bradford's side, speller in hand. He supposed that he should be seated upon the platform for the next hour, a punishment that he rather enjoyed.

'I think I must keep you close to me for awhile,' said his teacher, fastening her apron tightly around her waist, and knotting the end of one string in the button-hole of Norman's jacket.

His face grew red, as a titter ran round the room; but in a moment he had recovered himself and was smiling as broadly as any of the scholars, quite as if he liked the novelty of his position. He trotted after Miss Bradford, as she walked about, and he had begun to think it was not so bad a punishment after all, when the lady stepped toward the door. Norman's heart gave a leap of terror. He had not counted on this.

'O Miss Bradford, please don't make me go out into the hall! Oh, please don't! I won't whisper another time this term if you'll let me off!'

His teacher shook her head gravely. She was used to the boy's promises, and she felt that nothing but a severe lesson would teach him obedience.

Norman groaned as the door closed behind them, for there, crossing the hall, was Ralph Preston. Ralph only glanced up, but in that brief space Norman knew that his humiliating position had been noted, and his own words repeated themselves over and over, 'You are an apron-string boy, you are!' Oh, if he could have taken them back! Now, Ralph would tell Frank, and the two would have much fun at his expense. Norman's eyes were fastened on the floor after that. His bravado was all gone. A more miserable boy it would have been hard to find.

The ordeal was over, at last, and Miss Bradford said, as she released him:

'I shall have to try this every time you whisper.'

'You will never have another chance,' said Norman.

She never did.

Six weeks passed, and Norman heard not a word from those at home in reference to that dreadful afternoon. One holiday the four friends were together when Norman exclaimed:

'Ralph Preston, you are a brick!'

Frank looked puzzled.

'Why such sudden praise?' he asked, laughing. 'Am I not a brick, too?'

'Yes, you are,' returned his brother, 'but not for the same reason;' and not another word could he be coaxed to say about it.

But Ralph knew that this was Norman's way of thanking him for his silence.

ACROBATIC FEATS.

ACROBATIC performances were of very ancient date. In old times every King or great noble had his troops of acrobats and dancers, and after the master and his guests had feasted, the performers were called in to amuse them with dances and tumblings.

Some kings were fonder of this style of amusement than others. Henry VIII. of England was said to be particularly devoted to it. He paid large sums to professors in the art. Queen Mary, his daughter, inherited his tastes. At her coronation, a Hollander, named Peter—his surname seems to be lost—executed feats of agility under the summit of St. Paul's. He walked a tight-rope stretched to the summit of the steeple of that imposing and venerable church, sustaining himself 'sometimes on one foot, sometimes the other, while he brandished a huge flag which he waved in the air.'

But rope-dancing is a much older amusement than King Henry VIII.'s time. We read of rope-dancing among the Greeks, B.C. 1345. Some historians give it an older date than that. Some performers, we read, suspended by their feet, threw themselves over and over the rope as a wheel revolves around its axis. Others rested on it, with the stomach, the arms and legs extended, and slid down from some great elevation with the rapidity of an arrow. Some ran upon a rope stretched obliquely, others, walking upon a horizontal cord, leaped and threw somersaults as if they had been upon the ground. These ancient artists seem to have been quite equal to the performers of to-day.

The Romans, not content with the exhibition of men upon the tight-rope, instructed animals in the art. Under Tiberius there were spectacles of elephants walking the rope. During the reign of Nero a Roman horseman drove his horse over this flexible roadway. The historian Pliny speaks of gladiatorial combats at which appeared 'elephants which performed astonishing tricks, throwing swords in the air, fighting like gladiators, dancing the Pyrrhic dance, and walking up tights-ropes both forward and backward.'

THE CANARY'S ADVANTAGE.

'I'M sorry for you,' said the Newfoundland dog to the canary 'That cage is awfully small for you, I should think.'

'Bow-wow!' retorted the canary, 'I'm not unhappy. I could fly all about in your world, but you never could get in my cage.'

HARRY'S WISH.

'PAPA,' said Harry, as he looked at his new baby brother, 'I wish we had seven more, because with him and me and seven more we'd have a baseball nine.'

Little Arthur was visiting his grandmother, who owned a large rooster that was possessed of fighting qualities. Arthur went out to feed the chickens, when the rooster flew at him, pecking him severely. Arthur beat him off as well as he could, and finally got away and ran to the house. Some time later he was playing on the porch, when all at once the rooster flew up an adjoining fence and crowed lustily. Arthur looked up and exclaimed: 'You lie, you lie, you didn't lick me! I runned!'

CAESAR DISPENSING JUSTICE.

CAESAR, our great Newfoundland, had a very friendly way with small dogs, because he was used to them, there being always a few house dogs in the family, but he showed a decided preference; for although he would permit Juliet, a small Scotch terrier, to make his broad side her place of repose when she was out-of-doors, and seemed to like it, yet if Romeo, her mate, only a few pounds heavier, offered to follow her example, an ominous growl warned him off.

One of us children had to go every morning to the baker's for fresh rolls, and Caesar carried the basket. On the square there was a tailor's establishment, kept by a man named Cain, who owned a little reddish-brown dog which had arrived at old age without either its wisdom or its dignity. He had a bad habit of flying out at every dog which passed, even though the dog might be attending strictly to his own business, but he never meddled with Caesar, unless he had his mouth too full to resent such impudence.

One morning I was accompanied by an elder sister—one who had a very high spirit, and who could never bear injustice in any form—and when the little cur made his usual attack, she remarked, in low tones, 'Caesar, put down the basket, and teach him a lesson.'

Caesar needed no urging. Very deliberately he set the basket down, picked up the small red dog by the skin on the back of his neck, and began to trot off with his tormentor dangling from his mouth, in a very shrunken and scared condition. Caesar soon broke from a trot into a run, and in less time than it takes to tell it, he had sped around the square with his odd-looking burden, and returning to the starting point, dropped him from his mouth, very much terrified, but entirely unhurt.

The dog lost no time in getting inside the shop door, while Caesar picked up his basket and walked proudly away, never again to be molested by Cain's cur, for if he caught a glimpse of Caesar coming, he would disappear as if by magic, and he was much more careful about attacking other dogs as well.

CONTENTED.

A DISCONTENTED king was told that to become happy he must find a perfectly happy man, and secure his shirt to wear. He searched long, and at last found one man who professed to be perfectly happy. Now it only remained for the king to gain possession of the magic garment, but when he made haste to buy it, at no matter what price, the 'perfectly happy' man replied, 'Your Majesty, I never had a shirt.'

A lady to whose home a Scotchwoman sometimes comes to work once received from her a good lesson in contentment.

'Jean,' said the lady, 'with so many children, I suppose you can hardly get enough to wear. It is too bad, when you work so hard.'

'Oh, I've plenty, mem,' Jean replied, brightly. 'I've a Sunday goone, and a work day goone, a goone off and a goone on.'

'Really, four gowns! I'm glad of it. That is being very comfortably clothed.'

'Yes, mem,' answered Jean, with a radiant smile. 'I'm content wi' 'em, but it's two goones, mem. My Sunday goone is off, an' my work-day goone is on, ye ken.'

BADLY CRIPPLED.

A PARTY of tourists, including three or four boys and girls, were not long ago visiting an ancient church in a French provincial city. An aged beadle showed them the objects of interest.

'Whose portrait is this?' asked one of the girls, indicating an ancient canvas upon which the face and form of a man in armour could barely be made out.

'That,' said the beadle, after stopping to take a pinch of snuff,' is the celebrated Grand Duke Anatole, the founder of the church.'

'Was he a great soldier?'

'Yes; but he had the misfortune to lose a leg or an arm in every battle in which he took part.'

'How many battles did he take part in?' asked one of the boys.

The beadle, who was expecting a sneeze, looked skyward a minute, then sneezed violently, used his handkerchief and answered:

'Twenty-four!'