

'Practical Day,' as they called it, the questions ranged through sewing, knitting, cooking, drawing, etc. An absentee was required to bring one cent at her next appearance, and the pennies were voted to some charitable object.'

The Wit and Humor of Young America.

BY GEORGE W. BUNGAY.

LIGHT and shade fall upon the cradle. We often see that the child even has "caught the trick of grief, and sighs amid his playthings." Before the white teeth have blossomed in the red gums, and he is led like a martyr to the stake—beefsteak—and he is expected to chew meat, before he eschews milk. Pickles may be given to him to sharpen his wit and his appetite, and goddess or Godfrey's cordial administered to make him sleep, and he will sleep when the medicine or the motion of the cradle has made him weak and sick. If he escapes with his life the hardships of the nursery, where he is rolled in robes like a mummy, tossed from floor to ceiling at the risk of life and limb, and fed with food that is not always nutritive or digestible, he will find the shadow following him into the school-room, and in some country places, until recently, he would be sure to find seats of rough board, desks of rough board, teachers that were boarded around, and wooden-headed men on the board of education. Is it not a wonder that he is not a blockhead? Notwithstanding these disadvantages, he is bright and brimming over with pathos and humor. And yet there are men, who like the Irish member of Parliament [Sir Boyle Roche] who said that he would do nothing for posterity, because posterity had done nothing for him. Where are the rosy boys who wore blue roundabouts, and played at base-ball, and leap-frog, and marbles, and hide and seek in our boyhood? What has become of the head boy in school? Did he attain six feet in his stockings, or is he a sorry failure and without shoes and stockings?

Has he cultivated his feet and neglected his brains? Is he now a man of "vast moral requirements and of various misinformation?" Is he like Thackeray's king, who had on an overcoat, then a dress-coat, then a waist-coat, then a flannel coat, and that is all there was of him? "These frivolous lads may become members of Parliament yet," said Charles Lamb, sarcastically. Was the hero of our school, who wore the belt and the laurel, elected to Congress, or did he become a street-sweeper? Where are the companions of our youth, who looked up to him? Are they spinning the top of trade, and making business hum these hard times, or spinning on the highway behind borrowed horses? Are they flying the kite of speculators, sending up stocks and going up themselves? Are they playing marbles in blocks, instead of globes, and building mansions on Broadway or the Fifth Avenue? Do they play leap-frog at political conventions? Have not some of them played hide and seek, that last game of life, and in which mortals are hid in churchyard mounds? Notwithstanding the misadventures of childhood and youth, what light and joy and beauty there is in the hearts of children. Laughter ripples from their lips like water from a fountain. The various strands of all the prismatic hues are woven in a bow of hope for the child. "What have you learned during the week?" inquired a Sunday-school teacher of one of her infant class pupils. "Never to trump your partner's ace," was the answer.

"What shall I say next?" inquired a man who was making an uninteresting and dreary speech to some school children. "Please sir, say Amen," was the response of a little rosebud of a girl. Rev. W. F. Crafts has compiled what he calls a "Childhood's Dictionary." Here are some of the definitions given by the little folks:

Apple tree in blossom: "God's bouquet."—Apples: "The bubbles the apple trees blow."—Baldness: "Grandpa growing up through his hair." "What does back-biter mean?" "Please sir, it may be a flea."—Bedtime: "Shut eye time."—Chaos: "A great pile of nothing and no place to put it in."—Chewing the cud: "Cows chewing gum."—Designing: "My think, I think, and then draw around my think."—Dust: "Mud with the juice squeezed out of it."—Evil thoughts: "My naughty think."—Faith: "Doing God's will and asking no questions."—Fan: "The thing to brush the warm off with."—Gray hair: "The frost on your head."—Happiness: "It is to feel as if you wanted to give all your things to your little sister."—Horse: "An animal with four legs, one on each corner."—Ice: "Water that went to sleep in the cold."—Love: "I kiss her in my heart."—Nest egg: "The one the hen measures by."—Short pants: "At half mast."—Pockets: "Bags in clothes."—Salt: "What makes your tater taste bad when you don't put it on."—Pins: "A useful little article, that has saved the lives of a great many people, by not swallowing them."—Slander: "Nobody does nothing, and everybody goes on talking about it everywhere."—Snoring: "Letting off sleep."—Snow: "Rain popped out white."—Sob: "It means when a feller don't want to cry and it bursts out itself." Without further quotations, I will venture to remark, that in every family may be found illustrations of the intuitive wisdom and ready wit of children. "What is the chief end of man?" asked a teacher of a bright boy in his class: "The end what's got the head on," was the answer. This answer would have been impertinent had it been wit. It was undoubtedly a fair statement of the boy's philosophy, and we can afford to smile at it without censuring the manners of the pupil. A boy of six summers, who had been troublesome doubtless to his mother in the kitchen, was asked why God created all other living things before he created man. His reply was, "Cause he didn't want him hanging around, while he was making t'other things." In order to appreciate the humor of Young America, we must consider the fact, that he is naturally very active. He cannot keep still; he must walk, run, leap and jump, and his tongue is active as his feet and hands. He steps on the cat's tail to make her sing; he wants to teach the chickens how to swim. "How do you get along in school, my son?" "Fast rate," said Young America. "I can stand on my head without leaning against a tree."

The parents and teachers of Young America should bear in mind the fact, that while they must make due allowance for the wit and humor and overflow of mirth in his nature, there are sentiments, emotions and experiences that must not be trifled with. He should be taught not to laugh at the accidents and misfortunes that overtake and sometimes overshadow humanity in the walks of life. He must be taught not to laugh at men because of their color, their creed, their nationality, their dialect, their costume, their deformities, their infirmities, their impediments of speech, their poverty, etc. It is neither fair nor just to practice what some are pleased to call practical jokes, such as pointing a loaded gun or pistol at another, not even a pop-gun. He has no right to unhinge his neighbors' gates, nor to ring the door bell of a neighbor for amusement.

The holding of ropes across the street, the calling of offensive names—shouting after persons—

impertinent answers to civil inquiries tend to make a vulgar, coarse, and disagreeable little animal of Young America, when he should be a man in miniature—a perfect little gentleman. There may be noisy mirth without wit, as there was great cry and little wool at the negro-baby show.

The lady who made a great dash brought her husband to a full stop—so the mother who displays the forwardness of her hopeful too often, may find that she has helped to stunt the intellectual growth and moral development of her heart's idol.

Watterson, the distinguished editor of a Southern newspaper, announced in his own paper a year or two since, at a time when the political horizon seemed dark, and the air was filled with rumors, that "the first of the ten thousand Kentuckians had arrived, that he was in arms and weighed eleven pounds." That is a brilliant specimen of genuine humor—for which the child is not responsible, although he was the cause of it. Unconscious wit is seen in the prayer of the little four year old, who was taught to say a set of words for his absent father, but one evening he added to his petition the following: "While papa is away, please keep an eye on mamma." And this reminds me of the prayer of the little girl, who was about to leave the city for the country. At the conclusion of her short and simple prayer, she said: "Now good by, we are going to New Jersey to be gone three weeks." She did not intend to cast reflections upon the noble and beautiful State she was preparing to visit.

A boy may be witty without knowing it. "Is life worth the living, my son?" "That depends on the liver." That is a double entendre that would have been no discredit to Hood, in his happiest prime. To return to the lesson I wish to give in connection with this topic. Do not permit Y. A. to get the bit in his teeth, and run away with the idea that he is so remarkably smart that he can afford to be rude and disobedient. Do not permit him to run loose in the streets at night. A street-corner gathering, where boys and young men take lessons in loafism, may develop hilarity and coarse wit, but it points toward indolence, irregularity, immorality, and the penitentiary. Young America must have relaxation and fun, but let him find it at home in the family circle. If he cannot find it there, he may look for it where he would not like to have his father and mother find him. Never impress him with the idea that home is merely a human pen or dormitory, where he can only eat and drink and sleep. Provide books and pictures for him, and make him feel that "there is no place like home, sweet home."

If home is the cold and dreary abode of moping owls, where all are silent and sulky, or noisy only in quarrels or cruel criticisms of their neighbors, then there will be trouble in the camp. Music at home is delightful, and when you use the violin, or harp, or flute, or cornet, or organ, or piano to the trained voice, you have an entertainment that may charm angels. Home has a halo of sweet associations, be it ever so humble. "It contains the cradle, the sacred ark of a mother's love," and the "dear mother, dearer and sweeter than all others." By the exercise of courtesy, charity, cheerfulness and the graces that grow out of a generous nature, home can be made a little heaven below.

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