YOUNG FOLKS.

MEG'S OLD PITCHER.

BY MARIE JAMES.

It had been a clumsy pitcher before the handle had been broken off; so thick and heavy and ugly, that Meg dreaded to carry it down to the corner saloon, even in mild, pleasant evenings, but to night it was positive misery. The wind blew in gusts, sharp and piercing, and the cold was intense. It was one of those nights when the snow blows in little swirls, and crunches under your feet, and cuts like sleet as it strikes your face. Meg's dress was thin, and her shawl not much protection, even had the wind allowed it to hang closely to her, as a shawl should hang. Her hands were bare, too, and she could not protect them in any way on account of that pitcher. Its ugly surface seemed to concentrate and hold all the iciness in the wind against its sides, until in her numbness, she felt the burden slipping from her grasp, and was obliged to stop and deposit it on the snow-covered walk till she could warm the red fingers for their task again.

All this was neither a new nor strange experience for the child. As surely as the evening came, with it came Meg to the saloon for father's drink, and out again, and down the little back street, to the wretched place she called home. The neighbors were quite used to watching her pass, and they commented on her cleverness in neither breaking the pitcher nor spilling its contents, for Meg was a nice little girl. If she had been your sister, you would never have thought of allowing her to go out in the streets alone. But, as it was, she was quite used to doing the errands, which generally lay in the direction of the saloon; for Meg's father seemed to prefer drinking to eating, if he had to make the choice, and the state of his finances made this an everyday necessity. Her mother was a young woman yet, but so broken up by poverty and trouble, that she had lost her courage and self-respect, until she was fast growing as good a patron of the saloon as her drunken husband. This, you see, accounts for the extra size of the pitcher; it must carry enough for two.

Meg stood close by her pitcher, braced against an angle of one of the cheerless brick buildings which lined the street, trying to restore feeling to the poor hands. No one noticed her. People were too much engaged in forcing their way through the wind and snow, and reaching home—those who had a home—where warmth and light and love awaited them. The homeless ones were seeking some place of shelter; there were open doors even for them, [if only in the places where little Meg and the rest found the drink. Presently a big dog sought shelter in the same angle, and, seeing the pitcher, put his nose in it. Meg did not make a motion to drive him away; she had no fear of his caring for saloon drink; and something like a smile crossed her cold, little face as he pulled his nose quickly out again, with a muffled sneeze, and trotted away.

By and by the child took up the pitcher and started on, but it was colder than ever, and the fingers were stiff again before she knew it, so, with just a slight jostle from a passer at the next crossing, down went her burden with a thud. Now the advantage of a thick ugly pitcher was apparent, it did not even crack. To be sure, it had not very far to fall, as Meg's hands were not very high above the pavement. But, alas for the drink! A dirty, yellow streak in the snow was all the sign it left, as it made all haste to escape.

Meg was not given to crying. Experience had taught her the vanity of such a luxury, but she stood above the wreck in mute horror, not daring to go home. Her father had been too ill to work for some days, and the money left from last pay day had dwindled until she had taken the last cent to pay for the drink now buried under the snow at her feet. She began in a dull way to wonder what was to come to them all now, when a large man in a great coat, with his face so buried in a muffler that he could see nothing so far below his eyes as little Meg, came rushing over the crossing, and, before he could stop himself, knocked the child down in the drifting snow. He gathered her up in all tenderness, however, and then stooped to look into her face. It was the man who kept the grocery on the corner opposite to the saloon, and he remembered the child, who had occasionally come into his store for some small purchase. She was just such a bit of misery to-night, that his heart was touched, and, taking her up in his strong arms, pitcher and all, he carried her into his warm store—"Just till you thaw out, child !" he explained.

Quite an odor came from the old pitcher as it, too, grew warm, and between a whiff or two of that, and the bits of information Meg imparted, he soon learned the state of affairs with her.

"Never mind. I'll fill your pitcher with something better than it has ever carried !" said he cheerily; "just watch me now." And Meg did watch his every move eagerly. First he began to search his pockets. He was a large man and had large pockets. Finally he found a certain piece of paper. Meg wondered why he did not take some of the brown wrapping paper on his counter, as usual, but she was afraid to ask any questions. The man smoothed out this piece of paper and, taking some tea from one of his boxes, made a little package of it. A little heap of sugar was soon wrapped in a second piece of paper, from another pocket, and, while Meg's eyes were growing round, a little can of condensed milk was taken from the shelves. The grocer placed these three packages side by side on the counter, while he took the old pitcher and washed it thoroughly, inside and out; then he laid them in it.

Next he opened his glass case and took out some rolls; they were warm yet from the bakery, and Meg was quite wild with excitement as these, with some butter, and three little white cakes with sugar on, were crowded into the generous pitcher.

"Now," said the man, as he gave Meg another little bundle to carry, "if you are quite warm, we will go. I am going to leave my boy here to take care of the store while I carry your pitcher home. You must not spill it twice in one evening; it would ruin your reputation, you see." And he laughed so merrily that Meg laughed too right out loud. I can't begin to tell you what an unusual thing that was for her to do.

When they reached the house door, the grocer gave Meg the pitcher, and hurried away so fast she had no time to thank him. But he needed no thanks; his heart did more to keep him warm than his great coat, as he went back through the biting cold. Meg's father raised his head from the pillow as she came in, and said, "What kept you so, child ?" while her mother looked up in a dull way from her seat by the poor fire, but dropped her head on her hands again, saying nothing.

"Father," began Meg, "I spilled your drink." She paused, trembling, for she expected an outburst, but there was no sound from the bed, and she went on with more assurance; "but see what the grocer gave me." She laid her packages one by one on the bare table, and father and mother looked on in incredulity as she opened each one, and told all her story with a joyous ring in her voice.

The father was quite sober that night, and he had been thinking more seriously than for months past. Never before had he been entirely without money, and the knowledge of his condition had shocked and awakened him from his lethargy. There was little fuel and no food in the house, and where could he turn for help ? Drink had brought him to this, and he realized it. The thought of his little, ill-clad child breasting the storm outside, alone, and on such an errand, had roused the fatherly instincts which had been so long sleeping, and shamed him utterly. He had not been so softened for years. The grocer did not know that in his deed of kindness to a forlorn child that night, he was acting with God, but it was true, nevertheless. God had sent his angel before the gift-laden child.

"Suppose we have a regular meal for once, wife," said the sick man; "it would seem like old times again. There is wood enough to boil water for tea; a good stiff cup would do me good."

Mother boiled the tea, while Meg made the table as inviting as she could with the resources at command; and when all was ready, it was moved by father's bed. Do you think the little family enjoyed that meal, and were made better by it ?

There was a long earnest talk in the bare little room, after Meg's eyes were tightly closed for night—a talk which encouraged the poor, broken mother in one more effort to make a home. The paper wrapped around the tea had proved to be a temperance pledge, and about one of the other packages was a paper written over with good words of hope for the most hopeless.

"I will be a man yet, wife, with God's help," said the father, as he signed his name to the pledge, "and you will be a happy woman again. The look she gave him was all the answer he needed.

The grocer came next day with more packages, and, in a long talk with the sick man, he learned the sad story of his downfall, and then of last night's new resolve. He came again and again, as he was needed, and health and happiness came with him for all the inmates of the home. Time has proved the sincerity of that father's repentance, and his little Meg, being no longer the slave of the old brown pitcher, has grown to be a merry little girl who has quite forgotten the miseries of her babyhood, and who counts the kindly grocer her best friend.

Tommy Tough's First Voyage.

"Oh, Ma, who's that big man up there ?"
"That's the captain, Tommy."
"What's he up there for ?"
"That is his place, up on the bridge."
"What do they call it a bridge for ?"
"Because it goes over the deck."
"What deck ?"
"Why, Tommy, the deck we are standing on. Don't be so silly."
"Can't he ever come down ?"
"Who, Tommy ?"
"Why, that big captain."
"Certainly he can; whenever he likes."
"But you said that was his place."
"Well, so it is when he is on duty."
"What duty ?"
"Why, on watch; taking care of the ship."
"Is it his ship ?"
"No, dear; it belongs to a company."
"Company of real soldiers ?"
"No, certainly not; how absurd you are ! A company of business men."
"Can they sail for nothing ?"
"I don't know; I suppose so."
"We can't, can we ?"
"No, dear."
"Why not ?"
"Because your father does not belong to the company. Now, be quiet. Oh, look at that ship !"
"Where ?"
"Why, right there."
"Where is it going ?"
"I don't know. Do be still. I've a headache."
"Is there a captain on that ship ?"
"Yes."
"Big as ours ?"
"I don't know. Now stop talking."
"Ma."
"Well, what is it now ?"
"I feel real queer—kinder sick."
"Mercy sakes, Tommy ! Why didn't you say so before ? Come, hurry and let me put you to bed !"

He Knew He Had a Sure Thing.

"A boy is a strange machine, isn't he ?" queried the colonel as he looked out of the office window.

"I don't see anything so very strange about that particular boy," replied one of the other loungers, as he sauntered up and saw a boy of ten on the opposite side of the street.

"But he's got a jug," persisted the colonel.

"Well, what of it ? Can't a boy carry a jug ?"

"But he's swinging it around his head !"

"Let him swing. You never saw a boy who wouldn't."

"I'll bet he breaks it before he gets to the corner !" exclaimed the colonel.

"Nonsense !"

"Bet you twenty dollars."

"Done."

Half a dozen rushed up to watch further proceedings. The boy continued to swing the jug, apparently bent upon performing some particular feat, and just before he reached the corner his hand slipped and the jug was dashed in pieces.

"I knew it ! I knew it !" chuckled the colonel as he danced around.

"Drat him—here's your money !" growled the other.

An hour later after spending the interval in solemn thought, the loser mildly inquired:

"Colonel, did you think you had a sure thing on me ?"

"Certainly. I bought the jug for the boy, and gave him fifty cents to carry out the programme."—[Yankee Blade.

The Panama Canal.

In the "Contemporary Review" for March is an article on the Panama Canal, which bears very harshly on M. De Lesseps, the energetic Frenchman who undertook to construct the great work across the isthmus connecting the two American continents, which unfortunately collapsed for want of funds. Nothing succeeds like success, and had De Lesseps been able to complete his great scheme, perhaps, the writer of the article in question would not have been so severe. The Suez Canal will always stand as a monument to De Lesseps' indomitable energy and perseverance, and that his later project has fallen through, for a time at least, is perhaps, due in a measure to that very energy which led him to consider the engineering difficulties (which the progress of the work, so far as it has gone, showed that he was quite competent to overcome) rather than to give due consideration to the financial aspect of the scheme. At all events it seems unfair to charge the engineer of the canal with a desire to "revolutionize trade routes," and to show a disposition to rejoice over his failure to change the current of trade, for does not the same censure, if there is any reason for it in his case, apply to every projector of a canal or railway. And why should trade routes not be revolutionized ? Is the business world to remain at a standstill and not keep pace with the progressive ideas of the nineteenth century ? The main object of the Panama canal is to shorten a great trade route and to save the long passage around Cape Horn and thus enable vessels bound for the west coast of America or the east coast of Asia to take their cargoes to their destination without breaking bulk. He must be entirely out of accord with the spirit of the age, or actuated by selfish motives, who objects to the construction of a great work on the ground that it will "revolutionize trade routes."

There is a little more show of reason in what the New York "Times" says, quoted by the writer in the "Contemporary." That journal attributes "scandalous extravagance and carelessness" to M. De Lesseps. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the methods adopted to raise the money to say whether the charge is true or not, but the fact remains that while the estimated cost was placed at $240,000,000 the sum of $250,000,000 has actually been expended, with a large floating debt of unknown amount, while a recent report of the Columbian Government states that only one fifth of the necessary cutting has been done. These facts preclude the possibility of the canal paying, if it should be completed, and lessen the chances of the money being advanced by the French Government, or any one else, in order to save from absolute loss what has already been put into it. As for the probable traffic, De Lesseps estimated it at 7,500,000 tons a year, but English and American engineers have expressed an opinion that it cannot exceed 4,000,000 tons.

The company having the work on hand having collapsed, the question arises, Will the canal ever be completed ? De Lesseps has always been hopeful, but he is now an old man, the public have to a large extent lost confidence in him, and it is doubtful whether he can do anything more towards carrying to a successful issue his pet scheme. The only hope seems to be that the original investors, having become reconciled to the loss of what they have put in, will consent to abandon their claim, and that a new company, accepting what has already been done as a gift, will complete the work.

Meantime the project of a cut through the isthmus is likely to be realized in another way. Attention has long been turned to the San Juan route as a favorable one for water communication between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Lake Nicaragua and the San Juan River almost cut Central America in two, the distance between the lake and the Pacific being less than twenty-nine miles. The wonder is that this route has not been utilized long ago. The only objection to it appears to have been that it would involve a canal with locks, while De Lesseps proposed to have a tide water canal, which he had subsequently to abandon for one with locks and a somewhat uncertain water supply at the summit, an objection which does not hold good in the case of the Nicaragua route, where the supply of water is unlimited.

A Bill to authorize the construction of the Nicaragua Canal has been passed by Congress, and the matter is now in the hands of a private company, which proposes to undertake the work under concessions from the States of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and in pursuance of treaties entered into between those republics and the United States. Very careful surveys and estimates have been made, the collapse of the Panama scheme having taught the promoters that the utmost care must be exercised.

The distance from ocean to ocean by the proposed route is 169.8 miles, of which $56\frac{1}{2}$ miles is by lake, $84\frac{1}{2}$ miles by river, and only 28 8 by canal. The greatest cut through rock is three miles long, with an average depth of 120 feet. The length of the Panama Canal is about forty miles, all or nearly all of which would be cutting. Lake Nicaragua, which forms the summit, is deep and unobstructed, has a watershed of 8,000 square miles, and with that portion of the summit level in the San Juan river to the east and the cut to the west will afford 152 miles of clear navigation. The principal work in the river will be a dam 1,500 feet long and sixty-five feet high, not so great a structure as the dam on our own Rideau Canal at Jones' Falls. A recent survey also provides for a dam on the Pacific side, which will carry the level of the lake eight and one-half miles through a low divide, and three miles at the ocean level, or eleven and one-half miles in all. The summit level will be 110 feet above the mean level of both oceans, and this will be reached by three locks on the east end and a similar number on the west. The dimensions of the locks will be 650 x 70 x 30 feet allowing for the passage of the largest vessels afloat.

The total cost of the work is estimated at $50,000,000, to which may be added $15,000,000 for contingencies, or $65,000,000 in all, less than one-fourth what De Lesseps' Panama Canal has already cost. The estimated revenue is $8,000,000 a year, and the cost of maintenance $1,000,000. It is thought the work can easily be completed by 1895.

The question of climate is an important one in connection with this work. It will be remembered that great loss of life occurred in connection with the surveys and construction of the Panama Railway, repeated, though to a somewhat lesser degree owing to improved sanitary precautions, during the progress of the Panama Canal. The Nicaragua route appears to be entirely free from those climatic conditions which have proved so fatal at the Isthmus, and this circumstance will tell in its favour, not only during construction, but in its subsequent working.

The prospect, then, is that we will have a Panama Canal, perhaps two, before many years have elapsed, and that while De Lesseps may not live to see his own scheme carried to completion, he may survive to see it carried out in effect by what may now be regarded as a rival project. As for Mr. Whymper, who writes in the "Contemporary," it is to be hoped he will witness the revolutionizing of our trade routes by the canal to which he seems to be opposed, and of many others, if such changes mean progress and a developing of the resources which nature has placed at man's command. Such revolutions are to be desired, not contemned.

J. J. BELL.

A DESPERATE RISK.

How the British Man-of-War Calliope Got Out of Apia Harbor.

Naval-Cadet George Logan, son of Thomas A. Logan, a well known lawyer of Cincinnati, and one of the survivors of the Samoan disaster, reached home the other night.

In speaking of the escape of the British war ship Calliope, Logan said that after the German ships Eber and Adler had been lost the Calliope was seen to be going upon the reef. She was within a stone's throw of it, and had only one anchor left. Her only possible chance was to slip the remaining cable and try to steam out. This she did. It was the last desperate resort, and it was only successful through the skill of her commander, and the fact that she was a modern and powerful ship. Her engines were put at a speed that in smooth water would have driven her into fourteen knots an hour. As it was, she was driven against these terrible seas for over an hour before she got outside of the first reef, which she barely escaped, and during that hour she was only forced ahead one knot. A little mishap would have caused her destruction.

She was two days at sea and experienced a terrible time. She was washed again and again and lost all her boats, part of her spars and her upper works. As the speed of no other vessel in the harbor exceeded ten knots, it would have been suicidal to have attempted to drive them out.

"The Calliope," said Logan, "in order to keep to the channel in going out, steered direct for the stern of my ship, the Trenton, veering only at the last moment to clear her. It was a moment of terrible suspense as we saw the hugh ram of the Britisher towering above our decks and making direct for us. It looked as if she was going to cut us in two, and had she done so every one of us would have been drowned for a certainty.

"As she swung off, almost within touching distance, an involuntary cheer was given by our men, followed a moment later by three cheers all together. Afterward the captain of the Calliope said those cheers saved his vessel, as they put new heart into his men, who were almost ready to give up. As she sheered off Admiral Kimberley signalled: 'I have no fires,' as the reason why he made no attempt to get out of the way.

"After the storm our admiral lent boats to the Calliope to coal with and then gave one to her. In return the British commander presented Admiral Kimberley with a complete diving apparatus, and the officers of the Calliope presented to the officers of the Trenton thirteen sheep, and welcome they were, as the men were living on canned meat and cocoanuts."

Pardonable Under the Circumstances.

First Cynic—"Jones has filed an application for a divorce at last. I predicted that he would when he was married."

Second Cynic—"You don't say so. On what grounds does he ask a separation ?"

First Cynic—"Triplets—second time."

Time to Join the Majority.

She was the only female child, and she had three brothers. One day she was seen to take all her dolls and other female toys and throw them into the back yard. Then she marched in to her mother and said:

"Mamma, I want to get some of Frank's clothes." Frank was her smallest brother.

"What do you want with them ?"

"I want to put them on."

"What for ?"

"Well, don't you think I'm about old enough now to be a boy ?"

He Couldn't Afford It.

A Jewish commercial traveller in Vienna who had been to the theatre subsequently visited a wealthy banker.

"Have you been to the theatre yet ?" asked the banker.

"Yes, I have been there."

"How did you like it ?"

"I didn't like it at all. I never have had so much tediousness before in all my life. I yawned so much dot I vas in danger of getting some lockjaws, already."

"Why didn't you leave the theatre ? You certainly could have got up and gone out."

"You can talk dot vay. You are a rich man, but a poor drummer like me can't afford to throw away dot price of admissions. You dink I vas some spendthrift already or some Rothschilds.

An Effective Mule Invigorator.

While travelling in Virginia some time ago with a doctor we came upon an old colored man who was standing by a mule hitched to an old two-wheel vehicle. "Dis mule am balked, boss," said the old man; "an' I'll jis gib a dollah to de man what can start 'im."

"I will do it for less than that, uncle," said the doctor. He took his case from the carriage and selected a small syringe, which he filled with morphia. He went to the side of the mule and quickly inserting the syringe in his side pushed the contents into the animal. The mule reared upon its hind legs and giving an astonishing bray started down the road at a break-neck speed. The aged colored man gave a look of astonishment at the doctor, and with a loud "Whoa!" started down the road after the mule. In the course of ten minutes we came up to the old man standing in the road waiting for us. The mule was nowhere in sight.

"Say, boss," said the darky, "how much you charge for dat stuff you put in dat mule ?"

"Oh, ten cents will do," laughingly replied the doctor.

"Well, boss, heah is twenty cents. Squirt some of dat stuff in me. I must ketch dat ar mule."

THE GREAT AFRICAN FORESTS.

Enormous Extent of the Timber Region, a Part of Which Stanley Describes.

The great forest through which Stanley recently passed, which he estimated to cover 246 000 square miles, is only a small part of the great African forest which extends almost unbrokenly from the west coast in the Gaboon and Ogowe regions, with a width of several hundred miles to the great lakes. This belt of timber, trending away to the heart of the continent in a direction a little south of east, is, perhaps, the greatest forest region in the world. A part of it strikes south of the Congo at the great northern bend of that river, and the country embraced within the big curve is covered with a compact forest, the towering and wide-spreading trees shutting out a large part of the sunlight.

In these forests, completely shut out from the rest of the world, live hundreds of thousands of people who are almost unknown to the tribes living in the savanna regions outside. Scattered through the big woods within the Congo bend are little communities of Batwa dwarfs, of whose existence the traveller has no inkling until he suddenly comes upon them. Here also, along the Sankuru River, are the tree habitations described by Dr. Wolf, where the natives live in huts built among the branches to escape the river floods. It was in great clearings made in these forests that Kund and Tappenbeck discovered some of the most notable villages yet found in Africa, where well-built huts, with gable roofs, line both sides of a neatly kept street that stretches away for eight or nine miles. These villages are even more interesting than the street towns in the more sparsely timbered regions south of them, which were regarded as very wonderful when they were first discovered by Wissmann. It was his account of these villages that led Bishop Taylor to choose this part of Africa as the goal he wished to reach.

Last year the Commercial Company, which is investigating the trade resources of the Congo, sent its steamer, the Roi des Belges, up the Ikatta River into this great timber land, and the explorers described the country along the banks as "covered with an almost impenetrable virgin forest. It is a veritable ocean of verdure, from which emerges here and there a wooded mountain." Greenfell penetrated the forest for long distances on several southern tributaries of the Congo, and on the upper courses of these rivers he sometimes found the wide spreading branches forming a complete roof above the astram.

Faithful Buffaloes.

Every country boy knows how devoted the domestic cow is to her young, but, according to Colonel Dodge, the female buffalo, incredible as it seems, shows scarcely a trace of maternal instinct, and when frightened will run away from her calf without the slightest hesitation.

The duty of protecting the young devolves almost entirely upon the bulls. I have seen evidences of this many times, but a most remarkable instance was related to me by an army surgeon.

He was returning to camp after a day's hunt, when his attention was attracted by the curious action of a little knot of six or eight buffaloes. Approaching sufficiently near, he discovered that they were all bulls, standing in a close circle with their heads outward, while in a concentric circle of some twelve or fifteen paces distant sat at least a dozen large gray wolves, licking their chops in impatient expectancy. These wolves, with the exception of man himself, are the most dangerous of all the buffalo's enemies.

The doctor determined to watch the performance. After a few moments the knot of buffalo broke up, and, still keeping in a compact mass, started on a trot for the main herd some half a mile off. To his great astonishment, the doctor now saw that the central and controlling figure of this mass was a poor little calf, so newly born as scarcely to be able to walk.

After going fifty or a hundred paces it lay down, the bulls disposed themselves in a circle as before, and the wolves, who had trotted along on each side of their retreating supper, sat down and licked their chops again.

The doctor did not see the end of the affair, for the hour was late and his camp distant; but he had no doubt that the noble fathers did their whole duty by their offspring, and carried it safely to the herd.

Bored by a Dunce.

The late Matthew Arnold was bored once during a long journey by an ignoramus who would talk literature to him. Arnold would not dispute with him; but, when, with the portentous seriousness of one who has discovered a great truth, he said, "In my opinion William Shakspere was a great poet," Arnold warmly grasped his hand, and with equal gravity said, "Do let me shake hands with the only admirer of my favourite poet." A story of a different kind is told of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. Travelling down to Gloucester once, he was dragged into a long conversation, which ended in a countryman's taking the "autocrat's" hat and saying, "I read something in the paper the other day about the size of great men's heads, and I thought I'd like to know the size of yourn. But what bothers me is, my head's the biggest of the two !"

He Proved the Fact.

A mufti once read in a learned book that every one who wears a long beard is a fool. Now the mufti's beard was long. He decided to shorten it; but, as no barber was at hand, and, of course, no scissors, he was forced to try what the flame of his lamp would do. Accordingly, grasping the beard with his hand, at what he deemed a reasonable distance from his chin, he put the tip into the blaze. Up flew the fire and burnt his fingers; and, when, in an agony of pain, he plucked his hand away, the flames completed their work over cheeks and crown. Then the mufti realised that he who wears a long beard is a fool.

An absurd story comes from Victoria, B. C., that the Canadian fishing schooners proposed to go armed into the Behring sea seal fisheries. We will acknowledge that our fishing countrymen up yonder have not received their mede of attention and fair play, but their own shrewd common sense can surely be trusted to prevent them from committing any foolish act that may lead to immediate bloodshed and subsequent consequences the end of which it is impossible to foretell.