

The Friendship Fund

One of the saddest, and probably one of the most depressing, features of the present financial situation is that the working people who have been thrifty are now using up the last of their reserve fund, and, unless business revives soon, the greatest weeks of suffering are before us. It is not an easy question to know how to meet the situation. It is certainly a difficult matter to approach a friend and offer financial assistance, and it is equally difficult for the friend to ask for assistance; and friendship is, of course, the basis of contact and relation in working-girls' clubs. One girl in one of the clubs had an attack of pneumonia, and it was only by chance that it was discovered that she was without necessary food to help her through a period of convalescence. The case is the more serious when one considers that the girl has two sisters to support, and a mother. Of course the Friendship Fund is this girl's protection now. Another working-girl, not connected with the clubs, who has three orphan children of her sister to support, found herself unable to pay her rent. Here again in the Friendship Fund she found liberty. Another club girl with a sick mother and sister has managed to keep the rent paid, but ran in debt for her groceries. The grocer found he must have money; and this fund, through the medium of the Treasurer of the Working-Girls' Vacation Society, relieved the girl from this awful anxiety.

The case referred to in the issue of February 10, of the girl with a sick mother and sister, has been cared for. We do not wish our readers to feel that any case of special anxiety or suffering that comes to us outside of the Working-Girls' Vacation Society or the clubs will be unheeded. \$10 has been sent to a widow who has a paralyzed mother, to pay her rent. A girl sixteen years old, who is living with her mother, two sisters, and two brothers in two rooms in a rear house on the East Side, has become a protégée of the contributors to this fund.

Previously acknowledged.....	\$919 75
H., California.....	5 00
F. S., Brooklyn, N. Y.....	5 00
E. A. C., Pasadena, Cal.....	1 00
A Friend, Chatham, N. Y.....	3 00
Total.....	\$933 75

Picked Up

The Massachusetts State Board of Health has traced two outbreaks of typhoid fever to infected milk, and urges greater care on the part of consumers as to the source of supply of the milk furnished their families.

In a parish in Wales an invitation was sent to the members to attend a tea-meeting. The invitation read: "Each person to bring a cup and saucer and something to eat. Discussion after tea whether there shall be any religious instruction in schools."

A man who was born in Maine, but left it many years ago, recently returned. He was surprised, not at the changes in houses or the growth in towns, but at the hours devoted to business. He says that when he was a boy lawyers worked in their offices all the evening, factories ran until 7:30, and people never had any time for social life. Now, the returned traveler says, the evening is given to family and social life. He argues that a hundred years hence no one will work in the afternoon.

The study of hygiene and physiology has been made compulsory in the public schools of Connecticut. This is a triumph for the temperance people, as the purpose is to make the pupils familiar with the effects of narcotics and alcoholic drinks on the human system. In some of the towns the parents have refused absolutely to buy the textbooks for their children, and the children have been suspended. The matter was carried to the courts. The children have been reinstated, but the parents have been ordered to buy the books. The committees in some towns have decided to buy the books for pupils whose parents are too poor to buy them, and to charge the expense to the town. This has aroused opposition on the part of some

of the taxpayers. The friends of the movement claim that the opposition is due wholly to the liquor-dealers.



What a Blind Boy Accomplished

By Mary B. Claffin

It was a glorious May morning, and the old orchard in the valley at the foot of the Tennessee Mountains was shining with the early dew. Everything seemed full of life and hope and promise. The apple-blossoms and the violets, the woody ferns, and a thousand other flowers that had awakened from a long winter's rest, poured forth their delicious fragrance and sprinkled the green earth with touches of brilliant color—pink and blue and red and purple. Buttercups and dandelions shone like stars among the grass. The robins and the blue jays and the whippoorwills were all settled for the summer. The robin's cheerful song awoke the children in the morning, and the whippoorwill's mournful plaint lulled them to sleep at night.

It was on such a day, in such an orchard, that a group of children, having finished their lessons and thrown aside their books, had gone out, with happy hearts and merry voices, to hunt birds' nests, to gather wild flowers, to play at football, and to climb the trees in the old orchard, where it was their custom to hold high carnival on the soft green grass, in the shade of the pink and white boughs, and in sight of many a tempting bird's nest and squirrel's hiding-place. They were shouting as only happy country boys can shout; they were turning somersaults, and daring each other to climb yet higher in the trees, and to run yet faster on the greensward; and a jollier set of boys could not be found in all that beautiful Tennessee valley.

The little three-year-old pet, who had been awakened from his noon slumbers by the uproarious merriment of the older children, came running toward them. Some one broke a branch of an acacia-tree, with its bright yellow blossoms, and handed it to the baby; and he, full of glee, ran to join his brothers, and, running, he stumbled, as babies will, and fell on the branch he had in his hand. A thorn on the stem of the acacia pierced his eye.

The merry laugh of the little fellow was quickly changed into a bitter cry, and the children, dropping their bats and balls, ran to comfort him. He was taken to his mother, and every voice was hushed and all thought of play forgotten, and the baby's plaintive moan was all that could be heard.

Long days of suffering followed, and, as the inflammation in the wounded eye increased and extended to the other eye, hope grew less and less each day. Day after day dragged on, and the whole life of the old farm-house was changed. The father was broken-hearted, the mother went about sad and silent, the older children were softened and subdued, and they vied with each other in trying to comfort and cheer the baby boy, whose eyes were now forever closed upon the beautiful things which had filled his heart with joy. As sight was fading and darkness shutting in around him, and the family realized the sad truth that nothing more could be done, the first thought of every one was to minister to little Joseph. He was the center of every interest, and all plans were made with reference to his comfort. His physical health was robust, and he soon developed the instincts of an active, healthy boy. He entered into all the pastimes and frolics of his older brothers, with as much zest and pleasure as if he could see as well as they. But with his physical development came a mental activity which made him long for school and books, and for the occupations as well as the pastimes of his brothers.

Joseph said in after years, "I cannot tell you anything approaching the anguish of those long, weary days, when my brothers were in school. Long before the time for their return I would wander far on the way to school, and, with constantly growing impatience, would wait for the voices of the merry boys and girls on their return, that they might repeat to me what they had learned in school."

The little blind boy spent many hours alone, picturing

to himself the old orchard, with its trees of apple and peach and cherry, and the broad expanse of clover-field, with its white and red blossoms stretching far away in the distance.

He said in after years: "I can see them all before me, and I can see my dear mother's face. The two pictures left to me, which of all others I would most wish to have impressed upon my mind, are my mother's face and the old orchard as it was, in full bloom, at the time the curtain was drawn over my eyes. How I loved the stars! When my dear mother took me on her knee and talked to me about them, I said, 'Why do not the stars twinkle and shine, and why does not the dear God light them for your little boy?' And, for answer, the hot, silent tears fell upon my face, telling me of my mother's anguish."

When Joseph was ten years old, a school for the blind was established in Tennessee. It was announced in the newspapers that ten blind children would be received and instructed at the State's expense, in Nashville. This was startling news. The parents of Joseph had been praying for some opportunity for their blind boy, and immediately they set about doing what they could to prepare him for the journey and for the school. The neighbors gathered together and contributed from their small resources all they could spare, a sewing-bee prepared his little wardrobe, and in one week Joseph started for Nashville, a long and tiresome journey in those days. The parting was sad.

"My mother wept and prayed," said Joseph, "my father sobbed aloud, and my brothers ran away to hide in the haymows, because they could not bear to say good-bye to the household pet."

It was a bright October day when Joseph started with a neighbor, whose business called him to Nashville, and the journey in the old stage-coach was a sorrowful one to the little blind boy who had never left his mother's side for a day.

His joy knew no bounds when, for the first time, he had the books printed in raised letters put into his hands. In three-quarters of an hour he mastered the alphabet. His opportunities were unusual; the first few months, the pupils were so few, the teacher could give much of his time to Joseph. His enthusiasm for learning was so great that his progress was phenomenal, and in two months' time he could read everything that was put into his hands.

He made great headway in all that he undertook except music. This, his teacher said, he could not master, and he had better give it up and devote himself to basket and brush making. These were the industries taught in the school. As the music-teacher refused to give him lessons, he bargained with one of his fellow-pupils to repeat to him the lessons as he took them from the teacher. This he did, and Joseph improved the moments when the teacher was away to practice what he had learned from his school-fellow. One day the school was to take a holiday, and the boys were to go with their teachers for a day in the woods. Joseph thought this would be a good time for him to practice. Accordingly, he hid away in the barn, and, when the party was ready to start, nothing could be found of Joseph. After hunting and calling in vain for a long time, they decided to go without him. No sooner had they gone than the blind boy took his seat at the piano, and there he sat, only changing his position now and then for rest, until the party returned.

The next day, as Joseph was practicing, the music-teacher, who was himself blind, unexpectedly entered the room, and said, "Who is that playing the new lesson so well? Who is at the piano?"

"I, sir," said Joseph.

"You cannot play. Tell me who is at the piano. Come here and let me hear you play that lesson."

"After repeating the short study I had been playing," says Joseph, in relating the story, "I was asked what else I knew. 'All that you have given the other boys, sir,' I said."

"Let me hear you play from the instruction-book," said the teacher.

There was but one piano in the school, and, by special permission, Joseph practiced from four to seven in the

morning. Fifteen months later he took the prize for pianoforte-playing. Some years later Joseph was teaching, with great success, in a large institution in New England, and could play with ease the most difficult compositions, after hearing the notes once or twice read.

During the years he had spent at Nashville, he, with a faithful guide and a well-trained horse, had ridden through forests, had scaled mountains, and forded rivers, and searched every corner of the State in pursuit of blind children. He had taken little blind children from wretched homes in the forests, strapped them on the saddle behind him, and ridden forty or fifty miles over untrodden paths, through an unknown country, till he reached a stage route; and he left the little blind child in the care of the stage-driver, to start again for some other blind child of whom he had heard, perhaps through a traveling peddler, or by consulting the census.

Thus several years passed at the Nashville institution, and Joseph thought he had accumulated enough to justify him in resigning his position and going forth to realize the golden dream of his life—a college education at Harvard. But obstacle after obstacle appeared in his way; his health gave way, and, through the unfaithfulness and treachery of a trusted friend, his money was lost, and he was obliged to give up his cherished plan for a college education and take a position as teacher.

After teaching some years, he was advised to go to Europe for a year of rest. What he accomplished abroad every American should be proud of.

Joseph's first thought, when he reached London, was for the little blind children. He at once began to investigate the institutions for the blind, and to study the methods that were in use for their instruction and improvement. He found them very unsatisfactory.

He had been but a few days in London when he learned that there was to be a meeting of gentlemen to consult about the educational advantages for the blind, and, if possible, to improve their condition. This meeting was composed of gentlemen of high standing and influence. The Duke of Westminster and Dr. Armitage, with others greatly respected for their philanthropy and benevolence, were of the number. Our friend Joseph, a penniless, friendless, sightless American, an unknown foreigner, appeared among the noted gentlemen, and modestly expressed his views upon the subject of educating the blind. He had nothing to recommend him but his earnest, heartfelt interest in his unfortunate brothers, and his exceptional voice, full of pathos and feeling. He gave his views, and every one listened with bated breath to his eloquent appeal. As soon as he had spoken, he quietly left the room.

A moment after he had disappeared, the Duke inquired for the blind American who had just spoken, and was told that he had gone to the Charing Cross Station.

"Who led him?" said the Duke.

"No one," replied a person who had noticed his leaving the room unattended; "he went by himself."

"I will take my carriage and follow him," said the Duke; "it is not possible that a blind man, and a stranger in the streets of London, can reach the station, more than a mile distant, without accident."

Accordingly, he was followed to the station, all unconscious that the eye of the richest Duke in England was upon him; for the Duke became so impressed with his skill and wisdom in making his way through the crowded streets that he did not ask him to drive with him, but watched his movements from the carriage until he reached his destination, and then invited him to a place where they could have an interview. The interview resulted in a promise from the Duke to give our blind friend every aid in his power, both moral and financial, to establish a school where the blind should be taught according to his ideas.

Our blind American friend now set in earnest about establishing a school for the better training and education of the blind. He secured a building in London in the neighborhood of the Crystal Palace, and there began his labors, working with untiring zeal and enthusiasm to carry out his favorite theory that the blind are to be treated exactly like