

The Mother's Way

By *Newel K. Young.*

It was the first real quarrel of their lives, though Harry and Harold and Jane spent most of their time together at, and about Mrs. Brown's home. At the close of the row, when it was too late to prevent the trouble, Mrs. Brown heard enough to understand the nature of the quarrel, while picking raspberries. But she was far too wise to interfere then.

The children had built a play-house under the big apple tree that had been the center of their activities and pleasures for days. Harold had a little boy's kit of carpenter tools, and he had managed the building while Harry had rustled boards and been the carpenter's general helper. When the house was finished a feast had celebrated the occupation of it by Harry and Jane as man and woman and Harold as their friend, the carpenter. Harold had protested but Jane stood firm with Harry and the majority ruled.

The day of the fight Harry had gone on a long trip (he went on an errand to the other end of the village for his mother) on a mission to a foreign land across the ocean. When he returned, eager to tell his associates of an experience he had had on the ocean during his trip, he shouted, "I am home again, woman; I have had an awful time." His call received no answer, though he heard his wee-little-wife and the carpenter talking within.

As the returned traveler opened the door to walk in, Harold said: "You must knock. I am the man here now. Shut the door until you knock."

"Harold! I am the man. You are only the carpenter. This is my house."

"Go out! Or I'll put you out! I built this house, and I am the man! Ask Jane."

"Jane, say I am the man! Harold is the carpenter, isn't he?"

"You can't be the man all the time,

Harry. Go out and knock! Go on, or I'll put you out!" Harold struck a threatening attitude.

"They don't take turns. I'm the man all the time. So go out yourself," shouted Harry.

Clapping her hands, Jane cried, "See who can put the other out! The one that beats is the man."

"That isn't fair. You can't trade me off." Harry's black eyes were flashing fire as he turned to the bigger boy. "Get out of here, now!"

"Make me! Put me out, why don't you! You little pup." Harold stood with his head thrown back, his long blonde curly locks high over his brow.

Harry flew at the bigger boy in a rage, striking him a full blow in the face. Was he not fighting for his home and his little wife?

After he was completely exhausted and beaten Harold dragged him out of the door. Poor Harry! Wailing in his bitterness he instinctively sought a secret hiding-place. He rushed into the raspberry patch, but upon catching sight of his mother there, he turned and ran to the other side of the lot into the barn, and hid among the hay. Here he cried in anguish of soul more from the bitterness of his friend's treason and the cruel infidelity of his little woman and the humiliation of being beaten, than from his scratches and bruises.

For those who have the fairy gift of memory to live again some such bitter hour of childhood, there is no need of trying to picture the sufferings of this little fellow. To all others it would be casting pearls—well it would be vain. Only the poetic souls who can live again the joys and sorrows of childhood can really live with the children.

A few mothers and a few fathers will feel how hard the two hours that passed between the time the boy went

off alone in his grief and twilight were to his mother. And some will understand why the woman left the child alone. To too few is given the vision to know that even a little child, if he is truly a brave soul, must suffer in his Gethsemane alone. These few, truly brave themselves, know just when and how to approach the sorrowing, the poor, the betrayed, the suffering from whatever cause, and just when to leave them alone.

Just at twilight the mother, humming some sweet, cheerful air, slipped into the barn and said, "Come on, Harry; let us gather the eggs and go to the house; it is late." The boy went with his mother, running here and there for eggs. As they neared the house the woman took the lad's hand in hers. It was still hot from the agitation and suffering of the afternoon.

Their supper of bread and milk was eaten in silence; the boy was not yet ready to talk. No questions were asked. When the lad was ready for bed he left for his own room without bowing at his mother's knee for his evening prayer. As he entered his room he closed the door and slipped into his bed with his heart like lead.

After finishing her evening work the mother waited in the silence searching her own heart for the words of life treasured therein that named her boy as a child of promise. Then, seeking divine aid she went to him. The moonlight was streaming through the window over the bed. The boy lay there, his dark hair pushed back from his forehead, his black eyes shining with intense emotion. The mother tucked in the covers; smoothed the lad's hair; kissed him lightly on the forehead, then on the lips; then she sat on the side of the bed holding one of his hands in both of hers. Harry seemed not to notice his mother's presence. Thus they sat in silence for some time, bathed in the rich, mellow moonlight.

When the boy's pulse beat slower, his breathing was calmer, and his eyes had lost some of their fire, the mother

spoke. "Harry, boy, you have had a bad time, a hard, cruel time! But, my boy is a brave lad. Won't you tell mama all about it?" She tightened her hold on his hand, waiting silently a few minutes, then gently drew him towards her. The little fellow crept into his mother's arms and pillowing his head on her bosom wept like the broken-hearted child he was.

After the flood of his grief was past he poured out his tale of sorrow to the listening ear and understanding heart of his mother. She said just the few words needed to make him feel that he was given a sympathetic hearing. Her tears had flown freely with his, and now her heart was beating in tune with his.

When the child had emptied his heart of its trouble, the mother talked. "You are my only boy, the only man left me now. I depend on you to take care of me. You are to be brave and strong for my sake." Thus the woman talked on, picturing the life they were to live, and when the lad had partly forgotten his grief by the vision of the future she continued, "When you were sick and suffering nigh unto death the Lord spoke to you through His servant, a good man, promising you that you should grow to be a man and go on a mission and preach the Gospel; and that you should labor for the people's good at home. The Lord even said that you should be strong enough to suffer much without being bitter, or hating. This is part of that suffering; it has been an awful thing; but you are brave and strong and will not be weak or bitter over this."

Then this mother teacher gave a vivid picture of the betrayal and trial and death of the Savior, emphasizing His silence and patience and forgiving love. The boy's heart and mind were opened; he saw and understood a little the meaning of life. This was the beginning of a new friendship; henceforth Jesus was his friend and hero. The boy slipped to the floor to his

mother's knee: she bowed her head while he prayed. She tucked him away in bed, said good-night and went to her room.

Alone in her room the woman sat, or walked the floor, in the bitterness of her own sorrow and loneliness, fighting over again the battle of being reconciled to her cross. In the late hours of the night this lone woman took up the little Bible her father had given her long years ago in her childhood—the night he left her an orphan—and read again the story of the Garden and the Cross. Then she read Mary's glorious song of thanks-

giving for the promise of motherhood.

She had won! After preparing for bed she went again to the boy's room. He was smiling in his sleep. She kissed his lips. He spoke these words still asleep, "Mama, I'm your man." the mother went back to her own room to sleep and rest.

Through all the years of her life this woman bravely bore the double burden of being father and mother to her boy. And in the spirit of a comrade she guided her son in the way of life until his manhood brought a fulfilment of all the promises of his childhood and youth.