

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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REMARKABLE ANTS.

BEES and ants may be called civilized animals. They live in cities, and understand the value of co-operation. Indeed, they could give men some valuable lessons upon one of the oldest, the best known, and the truest of human proverbs: "In union there is strength."

Ants show wonderful intelligence, and the "driver ants" not only build boats, but launch them, too; only, these boats are formed of their own bodies. They are called "drivers" because of their ferocity. Nothing can stand before the attacks of these little creatures. Large pythons have been killed by them in a single night; while chickens, lizards, and other small animals in Western Africa, flee from them in terror.

To protect themselves from the heat, they erect arches, under which numerous armies of them pass in safety. Sometimes the arch is made of grass and earth, and gummed together by some secretion; and, again, it is formed by the bodies of the larger ants, who hold themselves together by their strong nippers, while the workers pass under them.

At certain times of the year, freshets overflow the country inhabited by the "drivers," and it is then that these ants go to sea. The rain comes suddenly, and the walls of their houses are broken in by the flood; but, instead of coming to the surface in scattered hundreds, and being swept off to destruction, out of the ruin rises a black ball that rides safely on the water, and drifts away.

At the first warning of danger, the little creatures rush together and form a solid body of ants—the weaker in the centre. Often this ball is larger than a common base-ball, and in this way they float about until they lodge against some tree, upon the branches of which they are soon safe and sound.

"Hunter Ants" are found in tropical countries. It appears that at particular seasons, when pressed for food, they leave their nests and enter the dwellings by millions. They are harmless to the residents if they do not disturb or kill any of the number. In half an hour the ants enter every room, wardrobe, trunk, and cranny in the house, in search of insects. They cover the walls, the floors, the ceilings, and even the under side of the roof, and woe to every cockroach, fly, or wasp that does not immediately escape!

In Trinidad they filled Mrs. Carmichael's house

for five hours, destroying hundreds of insects, and a score of mice and rats, which she saw covered with hundreds of the little warriors, until they were worried to death and then devoured. After this thorough depopulation, the ants suddenly left for their nests.

The negroes are so impressed with their usefulness, that they call these ants "God's blessing." One of them, passing Mrs. Carmichael's house just

almighty power and love, and the great calm of nature stole softly into her soul. Quick through the shining silence shot a bright star travelling behind a pathway of light. It sped down the sky, and was gone. Soon after another darted out, and left a waving green line to mark its course. Four or five glittering stars sped hither and thither during an hour. The young girl held her breath while she watched the wild, mysterious beauty of the meteors. They made her think of angels flashing through the sky on God's errands.

The next morning, as soon as she had said her prayers and read her Bible, she went to the library. Her teacher had taught her to look in an encyclopædia—a circle of knowledge—for what she wished to know about. She now read about meteors, and found they were bodies sometimes of gas and again of stone, weighing from one-hundredth of a pound to over a thousand. They move in untold numbers through space, and the earth meets perhaps millions in the course of a day. Each year in going round the sun the earth crosses two especially crowded tracts of meteors. It passes through one the 10th of August, and through the other between the 11th and 14th of November.

The shooting stars are the smaller meteors, and being attracted by the earth, and moving at the rate of thirty-five miles a second, they catch on fire in the air and burn out. The aerolites, or airstones, are heavier, and fall to the ground. They are too hot to be handled when they first fall, but many specimens have been picked up. Iron enters largely into the material of which they are formed.

On November 13th, 1833, an amusing shower of falling stars was witnessed in Virginia and other parts of our country. The negroes and many white people thought surely the judgment-day had come. There was earnest praying then from lips unused to

prayer, for even people who profess to doubt the Bible get suddenly religious when death seems at hand. Nothing so strengthens and consoles as a firm confidence in Christ, and a dangerous situation often makes this fact felt. A noted infidel mocked at the Bible during health, and as he was a talented physician his unbelief was much spoken of. In his last illness he sent for a preacher he honoured, and as the preacher entered the room he entreated him to get down on his knees and pray instantly for him. It would have been better if the infidel had prayed before himself.



ARMY OF ANTS.

after the above scene, called out: "Ah, missus, you've got the blessing of God to-day; and a great blessing it is to get such a cleaning!"

METEORS.

BY LEIGH NORVAL.

A GIRL lay in the stillness of the night near a window, and the stars looked down upon her in their solemn beauty. She was in trouble, and the deep, quiet heavens besprinkled with shining worlds comforted her. God spoke through his works of