

### ▲ Legend of the Bell.

BY ALBERT DEVON.

Long years ago there lived a king,  
A mighty man and bold,  
Who had two sons, named Dong and Ding,  
Of whom this tale is told.

Prince Ding was clear of voice, and tall,  
A prince in every line.  
Prince Dong his voice was very small,  
And he but four foot man.

Now both these sons were very dear  
To Bell, the mighty king  
They always hastened to appear  
When he for them would ring.

Ding never failed the first to be,  
But Dong, he followed well,  
And at the second summons he  
Responded to King Bell.

This promptness of each royal prince,  
Is all of them we know.  
Except that all their kindred since  
Have done exactly so.

And if you chance to know a king  
Like this one of the song,  
Just listen once—and there is Ding:  
Again—and there is Dong.  
—Harper's Young People.

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## Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 15, 1894.

### FEEDING OF THE FOUR THOUSAND.

BY REV. B. T. VINCENT, PHILADELPHIA.

(Mark 8. 1-21.)

HERE is a golden chain of five links. It reaches from suffering hunger to beautiful supply. It fastens a needy people to a rich Friend. It leads lost sinners to a mighty Saviour. We must study it, as showing how he will supply our need—for our bodies when we ask him, and it is good for us; and for our souls when we trust him and do his will. Now see as you study how useful every link in this chain is, and how it would be impossible to do without a single one of them.

1. *Compassion.*—Jesus saw the hungry people, and because he was God, and had made the wonderful machinery of the body, he knew what pain came with hunger. But he knew, too, because he was a man and had felt it himself, for you remember how in the wilderness he was hungry, and though he could turn the stones into bread, yet he would not, for he came on earth to suffer as we do, that he might have sorrow with us in our sorrow; and there is no sufferer in all the wide world for whom he is not sorry.

But he had a greater reason for being sorry for men than because of their bodily hunger, as we see in this lesson, when the Pharisees came out to him with their wicked ambition. For them he sighed deeply. Think of how your ugly tempers and envies and pride give him pain, too;

for these are worse than bodily hunger. Think how deep his pain for us is! Like as a great engine shakes the little building it is in, so this Divine love made this human soul to sigh. And afterward, when he was upon the cross, the Divine sympathy did break the human heart! Such is his pitying love; and this is the first link in this wonderful saving chain.

2. *Loaves and Fishes.* Now he could have made bread to fall from heaven as in the wilderness it fell when the Israelites were hungry and had nothing. But this could be only wisely done when there was no other way. This time there was another way, because the disciples had seven loaves and a few little fishes; not more than a single little lad could carry, for one did carry almost as much in another case where four thousand were fed with five loaves and two fishes.

Now we would have thought, since this was not more than enough for a few people, that Jesus would not have bothered with it, but just have fed the people in his own way. He did do it in his own way; and that way was to take what they had and make it enough. So God does in nature when he makes a great harvest grow out of the little seeds; but he does not bring the harvest without the seeds. So it is with whatever we may have of knowledge and love and will. We may want much of all to make ourselves good and great, but we might pray a thousand years to God to give us much, and yet he would not so long as we had a little knowledge and a little love and a little will which we would not bring out and give to him to be used in the answer to our prayer. You remember the old fable in which Hercules said to the carter, "Put your own shoulder to the wheel; Hercules helps them who help themselves." And then his cart came out of the mud.

And we must remember, too, that there is no getting great things done unless we are ready to begin in a small way, as in the use of the little bread and fish toward the feeding of four thousand. We must bring out our best, little and weak though it may be. The second link in the helpful chain.

3. *Blessing.*—But suppose we do use the little we have, it will soon be used up, and that will be the end of it. These seven loaves and few fishes would only have fed a half-dozen hungry people, and the thousands remained as hungry as before. Ah, there was another thing to do of great importance. This food was to come under the hand of Jesus. God was to be thanked for it, and to be owned as the Giver of it, and to be asked to make it worth something. An old book of the Jews, called the *Talmud*, says: "He that enjoys aught without thanksgiving is as though he robbed God." If this be true (and it seems true), we are thieves if we do not confess him in all we have and in all we do. Let us remember this when we sit at the table and eat our bountiful meals.

But the value of anything is so dependent upon this blessing, that it is more strange still that anybody will fail to secure the blessing. The force of all little things lies in their connections, as when you look at a match, the little splinter does not seem to be worth much; but when you find it can, by being lighted, connect a train of powder with a mine of gold down in the earth somewhere, you say, "Blessed little match! you will make me rich." So the delicate little finger that touched the keys of the electric currents which started the powder that blew up the rocks in the East River, New York, some years ago, was not much of a finger, until it was found what connections with great force it could make. A little seed is nothing until you think of earth and sunshine and rain, and then it is blessed with the promises of a hundred-fold. So thus we bring our knowledge, and love and will, and find out how they may be connected with great power. Jesus says this boy or this girl may be somebody—then it is that we are ready for great deeds. One of the early kings in England, when in battle, ordered the praying monks among his enemies to be killed, saying, "Bear they arms against us or no, they war against us, when they cry against us to their God." So does prayer make our little mighty. Thus the learning of the Pharisees did them no good while the weak disciples kept close to

Jesus, and their weakness was made strength. This is the third link in this beautiful chain.

4. *Work.*—Little things, even when blessed, are nothing until put into action. The loaves and fishes only grow when the disciples began to distribute them to the multitude. Then as they broke off piece by piece there was still enough in their hands to go on breaking and giving until all the people were filled. The match is nothing but a "blessed" splinter till you strike it, then it makes you rich. The little *hunger* is beautiful, as blessed, but it only blows up the rocks when it presses the key. The seed is nothing until you give the sun and rain and earth a chance at it. The farmer cuts up a potato into three or four pieces and plants them, and each answers with a whole mess of royal fellows for baking and eating.

So, always, work must follow hope, and hope will end in the joy of possession. Our knowledge, blessed, must be used, and it will grow, our little love must start out to win its way, and we shall be strong in love; our little wills that shrink from duty often, must be exercised, and soon we shall be heroes in the battle of life, never shrinking, never failing.

But we must work under command, as the disciples distributed the bread and fish. It may seem foolish to us as that might have seemed foolish to them. But that is none of our business. Once, on the Hudson River R. R., a station agent received telegraphic orders to turn a switch which would throw a coming freight train into the river! He did it without asking any questions. Now, though strange to him, it was right, for some escaped convicts from Sing Sing prison had gotten on that engine and loosened it from the train, and were coming down the road with it. The superintendent ordered the switch turned to give them what they deserved, and to save a coming passenger train from being run upon. We cannot tell whether orders are right or not; but if God gives them we must obey, for they must be right. When you start into a mountain road, it looks as though a hundred yards would end it; but go that distance and another hundred yards will appear, and so on until you reach the top. So when the handful of food has been given, the hand will be found full again, if God gives the order to distribute.

Thus go to work, weak and little though you are, and with the little that you have; and this is the fourth link in this great chain.

5. *Plenty.*—This comes out of little, through blessing and work. The multitude were filled, and still there were left seven baskets of fragments! How wonderful was all this! And yet not wonderful, when you remember that it was God who did it. It was he who fed Israel with manna and quails; who kept the widow's cruse of oil and barrel of meal from failing when she fed the prophet Elijah; who made the little pot of oil to fill many vessels at the command of Elisha; and who made this same prophet able to feed a hundred men with twenty barley loaves. And it was he who fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, and indeed what has he not done in wondrous love and power?

To you and to me he promises like wonders if we trust his love, bring to him what we have, secure his blessing upon it, and go to work to use it. All our powers will thus bring forth abundantly. We can overcome sin in ourselves; we can make ourselves wise and loving and strong; we can do good even among the worst of people, and make them good and happy.

But we must not seek this power from low motives, as the Pharisees sought after a sign, nor as the disciples afterward seemed to think more of the loaves and fishes than of the truth. But we must ask for power that we may do his will and honour him in blessing the world. Then will he do mighty things for us, and by us, for others. And this is the fifth link in this mighty chain.

Now notice that, of these links, three are divine, and two, only, are human; and remember that the three are very long and the two very short; but do not forget that the three without the two would be no chain at all. So, too, though Jesus loves and pities, we are to bring our little to him that he may bless it; then we must work with it, as blessed, before the

plenty shall come. Then shall we be able to eat of the bread of life ourselves, and be honoured with the privilege of handing it to other hungry souls, that they may be filled.

### THE CHINESE FEAST OF LANTERNS.

THE New Year is a time of great rejoicings in China. The series of holidays end with the Feast of Lanterns, which is celebrated on the evening of the fifteenth day of the first month. For many days previous the lantern shops are crowded with purchasers, who indulge their wild fancies in the choice of the lanterns they buy. And they have plenty to choose from. Lanterns of all shapes and sizes, some of the ordinary round shape, others more elaborate in make and colouring, and many grotesquely imitating men and animals. In some the figures inside the lantern are made to turn round by a horizontal wheel moved by the hot air from the light, and others are drawn about on wheels.

The material used is principally paper, but silk, horn, varnish, and glass lanterns are also made.

When the darkness of night begins, the lanterns already suspended all over the house are lighted, and the special festivities begin. The viands which have been offered to the protecting god of the family, and have been laid on the altar for his use, are removed to the dining-room, and with a plentiful supply of native wine are consumed by the household.

The feast over, the family—even the ladies, who on no other occasion venture out after dark—proceed to view the illuminations. Crowds are gathered round some of the lanterns which exhibit riddles inscribed on them. The owners of the houses where these lanterns are placed offer prizes—tea, pencils, fans, etc., to the person who first succeeds in answering the riddle.

### HINDU STORY OF THE HERMIT AND THE MOUSE.

IN a forest of the sage Gautama there dwelt a hermit or saint named Mighty-at-prayer. Once, as he sat at his frugal meal, a young mouse dropped beside him from the beak of a crow, and he took it up and fed it tenderly with rice grains.

Some time after this, the saint observed a cat pursuing this mouse to devour it, whereupon he changed the mouse into a stout cat. This cat was greatly harassed by dogs, upon which the saint transformed it into a dog.

The dog was always in danger from the tigers, and his protector gave him the form of a tiger, but considering him and treating him as nothing but a mouse.

The country folks passing by would say, "That is not a tiger but a mouse the saint has transformed." The mouse was vexed at this and said, "So long as the master lives this shameful story of my origin will survive." With this thought he was about to take the saint's life, when he, who knew his purpose, turned the ungrateful beast by a word to his original shape. Ingratitude is a crime.

### HATTIE'S CHICKENS.

HATTIE'S chickens are, no doubt, well cared for, even if she should sometimes forget them herself, though we hardly think they will care much for the wisps of hay she has brought them. It is a good plan to let children have something that they can call their own, whether it is a brood of chickens or a bed for flowers in the garden. It does them good to feel that they own it themselves, and apart from the pleasure it gives them, they learn to cultivate habits of forethought and oversight. Hattie's chickens might suffer if it were not for the handfuls of corn regularly thrown to them by others; but nevertheless, Hattie feels that they are her chickens, and she is really learning to look after and care for something beside herself, and that is a lesson of no small importance in this life, and one that cannot be learned too early; when we get to be men and women, we shall find all around us those who need our care and help, and what we have learned and practised in childhood will not then be forgotten.