

A RACE.

BY MARK GLODEN.

A mad little tear
And a sad little tear
Once started a queer little race,
"I am ahead!"

The angry tear said,
As it hurried down Peggy's small face

But the sad little tear
Met a glad little tear,
And together they hurried apace.
"I'm sorry, mamma,
Truly I am!"

And the sorry-glad tear won the race.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, MARCH 20, 1897.

MISSIONARY NUMBER.

THE GARDEN OF GOD.

BY SAMUEL GREGORY.

(Ezekiel 31, 9)

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

On the first page of the Bible there is the picture of "a Garden of God." You read there of Eden, with its shining rivers and its Tree of Life. God made the world "very good," and wanted men to live in a simple, happy way. The whole world might have been a sweet Eden, if men had always loved God and loved and helped one another.

THE HEAVENLY PARADISE.

On the last page of the Bible is the picture of another "Garden of God." You read there of the heavenly paradise. It, too, has a river of life, clear as crystal, and a Tree of Life, with twelve manner of fruits—a happy garden of delight, where there is no sin or sorrow. God's love will bring us all there some day, that we may rejoice with him forever.

THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL.

But it is not of either of these gardens I want to speak, but of another. Your mind is "a Garden of God."

Sometimes where a garden joins a dwelling a boy has a little bit of ground for his garden. There he makes the letters of his name in flowers. He plants it according to his fancy. It is his garden, to do with as he pleases.

Think of your mind as a garden. It is your own. You can take care of it or neglect it. You can do what you like with it. It is your own garden. Everybody can have a little Eden in his own mind, sweet as a paradise of roses. This is "The Garden of God," and we have each to care for and cultivate the mind which God has given us.

A FLOWING SHOW.

If you go to a Flower Show you see wonderfully beautiful proofs of what can be done with care and attention. At a Flower Show a man pointed to some lovely flowers, and said: "These are all new!" He meant that a plant once bore a flower that was not very pretty. But some one set himself to cultivate that plant. He watched it, and selected the finest growths. Then he treated them in a way he understood, and next year they were a little better. So he

made another selection of the best of these and worked at them, and next year the flowers had improved, and so at last he carried to the Flower Show wonderful blooms, and said: "See what I have made out of that poor plant which I took in hand."

A SCHOOL.

But a school is more wonderful than a flower show, and shows us what can be done by care and attention. It is not all at once that we see beautiful results. The mind improves slowly, like flowers. At six years old it has not more than the beginnings of things. At twelve years old the mind has grown and makes more show of its flowers. And so we go on, and so we ought to go on, growing and improving, and as Isaiah would have said, making "the desert blossom as the rose."

THE SPADE.

Three things belong to the cultivation of a garden that are like things in the cultivation of your mind.

The first is Digging. That is the hardest thing. It is real work. There is nothing done without work. If you look at a great thing, for instance a beautiful picture, you sometimes think that the man who made it did so because he was "clever," and did it all at once, without much trouble. But the question is, "How did the artist become clever?" He began to try. He tried again, and kept trying, and worked patiently for a long time. So gradually he became clever. But when he had become clever he did not find things easy. He had to work hard, and would tell you that all great things are done only by hard work.

There is a story of a strong man who could carry an ox. He took a little calf, and lifted it in his arms, and carried it about. Next day he did the same thing. So every day he carried the calf while it was growing. His strength grew with practice, and at last he could lift the ox off its feet, because of such daily perseverance.

It is an old fable, and you know what it means. You have but to begin quietly, and keep on patiently, and strength of all sort grows.

I once read a book where it was told of some one asking a boy how he could get through a great broad yew hedge. The boy said: "There is no twig or branch in the hedge so thick but I could break it, so I should take a twig and snap it, and then another, and so go on until I had broken a way right through that great thick fence."

It is said that an old man had some sons who did not like hard work. He was a farmer—perhaps a fruit farmer. He said to his sons: "Somewhere in our land, not far down, there is a treasure. I cannot tell you exactly where it is." The sons set to work, and dug every inch of land with their spades. They found no treasure. But when autumn came there was a wonderful crop. They saw that the digging had done something, for the land never before yielded so much. Then one of them said: "I've found it. This is the treasure our father meant. We hoped to find gold buried in a clay pot. But digging has given us the treasure of a good harvest."

So they were taught the first great lesson of work.

THE SEED-BASKET.

After digging the garden comes Planting. The gardener puts in seeds and roots, and fills his ground with good things, that are to grow there.

All school work is like that. It is planting seeds in the garden of the mind. All reading ought to be like that. We ought to get something out of a book into our mind.

Some of our reading is very useless. It is like what I once saw in a military prison which I visited long ago. A soldier, who had done something wrong, was being punished. He had a cannon ball to pick up, carry across a court, and lay down on the ground. Then he had to pick it up, carry it back again, and place it where it was at first. He had then to take it up, and carry it across the court again—and so on for several hours. It was useless work. All he did came to nothing. There was nothing to show for it. It was silly idle work at nothing at all. So is reading books, if we read them merely to get through them, and if, when we have finished, there is nothing good put into the mind.

Now the Bible is a book full of words and things that are like seeds. We read them many times over. We learn the words by heart. We hear sermons about them, and every Sunday teachers are trying to plant beautiful flowers of the Bible in the garden of our soul. The sweet forgiveness of Joseph: the courage of Elijah: the conscientiousness of Daniel: the love and gentleness of Jesus

—these are lovely things that we all plant in the garden of the mind.

And they grow. For we become forgiving, and courageous, and conscientious, and show love and gentleness. When you see a good man, who loves God, and does what is right, and helps to make the world better, it is because beautiful things of the Bible were planted in his mind and have taken deep root there. If you see a real noble Christian character you can say of it, "That is a Garden of God."

THE HOE.

Everybody knows that digging and planting are not all that belong to gardening—there is Weeding to be done. Besides things you want to grow in a garden there are things you don't want to grow. You do not plant them—they come. Once it is said that a Scotchman went to a new country across the sea. He said: "I will take some seeds and plant them, so that I can see the beautiful Scotch thistle and think of bonnie Scotland." He took a waistcoat-pocket full of thistle seeds. The land he went to had wonderful soil, his thistles came up rank and tall, blew their seeds across the country, and in a few years had come near to smothering everything. The place was in danger of becoming a terrible thistle garden. "Ill weeds grow apace."

One of the men in the Bible says that he passed by the garden of a sluggard, and "saw and considered it well," for it was "all grown over with nettles, and thistles covered the face thereof." He received instruction, he says. He learned that if you do not take care bad things grow up in the mind and spoil "the Garden of God."

I have seen farmers walk about with a long stick, on the end of which is a bit of steel like a carpenter's chisel. They call this a "spud," and as they go along, if they see a dock or a thistle, they dig it up, and help to keep the land clean. In the same way a gardener takes his hoe, and stoops among his plants and flowers, to hack out the weeds that grow so fast.

I am sorry to say that in all of us there are wrong things. We learn to pray in order to get these bad things out of our minds. Prayer is weeding "the Garden of God." We ask Jesus to give us his gentle and good spirit, that all beautiful things may live and grow in us, and that all bad things may die in us. When we were babies, being baptized, that is what they prayed for us, and that is what we go on praying for all our lives.

You know how the dandelion bears its flower, and then crowds its stalk with a beautiful but a troublesome thing. The dandelion flower turns to a delicate white ball, like exquisite lace-work. The wind comes, and the wonderful ball flies off in hundreds of little feathers, which drop somewhere to start another plant. If you had cut off the flower before it came to seed that would have prevented a hundred weeds from growing.

It is for a like reason that we all begin early to think and be careful, and pray God to help us, in order that bad and wrong things may be cut down and not allowed to spread and spoil "the Garden of God,"—that little Eden which we call our mind.

A PASTOR WHO SOWED NICKELS.

A home missionary relates a very interesting and instructive story showing how one little mission church in New England helped the cause by a decidedly novel method. One Sunday in May the pastor brought out some nickels and offered one to every man, woman, and child who would use one apiece as capital to invest in some profitable way for missionary work. The returns were to be made at the Thanksgiving season, and each person was to report how his nickel was used and say to what missionary organization he wanted his money to go. In a few days thirty-two "talents" had been given out. Along with this plan were put six dollars which had just been received from the sale of potatoes raised the year before on "the missionary lot." The various gatherings, or "bees," for the cultivation of this land had aroused considerable missionary interest. These methods did not seem to be sufficient. Several times during the summer and fall public inquiry was made as to the fate of the nickels, and the Sunday-school superintendent hinted that they would have to hustle if they got ahead of him when the day of reckoning came. Finally the day of reckoning did come, and the Thanksgiving week-day prayer-meeting was given up to hear the reports upon the "talents." One had bought material and made catsup and sold it; another, picture frames; another, candy; another, cookies; and so on. Two little boys had bought corn, popped it, and sold

it at fivefold increase. Some had worked all summer, while others had barely escaped bringing their nickel back in a napkin. The pastor confessed to one failure on melons, but saved himself by buying an egg with the rest of the nickel and raising a lusty chicken. One girl—who does not find it easy to take part in prayer-meeting, but knows how to work, and once flew out of the house like the wind and stopped a pair of horses which were running away and dragging her father along the ground—said that she made her money on raising beans. We learned that she had found a piece of ground near the house, which her father had ploughed, and captured it easily. Some who were not natural traders earned money and handed it in along with their nickels, and a few gifts were made by others. At length the superintendent was reminded that "the day of reckoning had come" for him. He had bought some sweet corn with his money and had planted and cared for it. The largest single return up to this point had been a dollar and sixty-five cents. Gravelly rising, the superintendent said: "I know thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine: three dollars and thirty cents." A round sum was raised.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.
PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

MARCH 28, 1897.

Timothy who knew the Scriptures.—2 Tim. 3, 15.

AN INTERESTING PERSON.

There are few more interesting persons mentioned in the Bible than Timothy, whom Paul called "his son in the Gospel." When Paul visited Europe in his first missionary journey, the grandmother of Timothy, whose name was Lois, was converted. The conversion of his mother, Eunice, followed soon after. And when Paul was engaged in his second missionary journey, Timothy was brought into the church, and commenced his Christian career. No doubt he was much indebted to his mother and grandmother for the religious instruction which he received, but no mention is made of his father, hence it is supposed that he was either dead when Paul visited their locality, or he remained disobedient to the call of the Gospel, as many in modern times unhappily are doing. Are any of our Juniors rejecting the Gospel?

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The word Scriptures means "the writings," and has reference to the ancient mode of preserving the sacred records. Before the art of printing was discovered, all records were written on sheets of vellum, much in the same way as maps are now made.

The Scriptures which Timothy thus knew were only those parts which are known as the Old Testament. The Jewish people taught their children the Scriptures very diligently. They are commanded to do so, as may be seen in Deuteronomy, 6th chapter.

THE ADVANTAGES.

Knowing the Scriptures from "infancy," as Mr. Wesley translated the word "child," he would be brought up in the way he should go. He would thus be saved from the snares which beset the path of youth. If all were thus taught, what benefits they would enjoy, how useful they would become! Too many parents neglect their duty toward their children, and then wonder at the trouble they have to bear in after years. The Sunday-school supplies a great lack, but no institution, no matter how sacred, can assume the responsibility which belongs to parents.

SALVATION.

The Scriptures are the only book which teaches salvation, and until men become acquainted with this theme, all their knowledge is foolishness. The word means deliverance from danger. See Exodus 14, 13. The Scriptures teach us how salvation is obtained, "through faith which is in Jesus." Christ procured this salvation, hence, it is a great salvation. Hebrews 2, 3. All who accept Jesus as their Saviour, believe that he died for them, and that God forgives them for what Christ has done, receive this salvation. Have you thus believed?

"Believe in him that died for thee,
And sure as he hath died,
Thy debt is paid, thy soul is free,
And thou art justified."

The number of persons to the square mile in England is placed at 480; in the United States at seventeen.