

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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When the Corn's a-Talkin'.

Gentle awtum, gentle awtum,
You're a charmer, ain't ye now!
With yer paint on like the nation,
Lookin' finer 'n all creation,
With yer duds of red and yellor,
Like big apples ripe and meller,
Stickin' fast to bush and
bough.

You're a sweetheart, ain't ye,
awtum,
With yer posies 'long the
brook,
Like live coals of fire glowin'
Down in the late green
mowin',
And yer gentians torn and
tattered,
And yer golden-rod thick
scattered,
Like fine picters in a book.

You're a stunner there's no
doubtin',
With yer woods and swamps
adrip,
And blackbirds whooping
bizzy,
So'st my head gets light and
dizzy,
A-listenin' to ther chatter,
And the wicry, fightin' clat-
ter
Of the jaybirds raspin' lip.

But I tell yer, awtum,
squarely,

What I like the best of all,
Is ter hear the corn a-talkin'
When the wind is through it walkin',
And ter ketch the pumpkins listenin',
And a-layin' low and glistenin'
As ef waitin' fer a call.

And another thing I'm set on,
I'm a-achin' fer ter tell,
Is ter see the apples droppin'
And the chestnut burrs a-poppin',
And a-shellin' out ther picnder,
While the pigs are chankin' under.
Oh, I like this passin' well.

And now, come ter think, I reckon
(As I'm sayin' now my say),
I must mention—but I'm thinkin'
It's the heart that's allers drinkin'
In the good that God has given,
That makes a life, a liver,
And fills even ev'ry day.

AGRICULTURE IN PALESTINE.

Under the influence of several large land-owners, or by the exertions of certain colonies of Jews and foreigners, the cultivation of the arable lands is extending from many centres. Nearly the whole plain of Esdraelon, for instance, is now divided between the Sultan, who

has recently secured a good slice of its eastern portion, and a wealthy firm of Syrian bankers, who have, little by little, purchased almost all the villages and lands extending from the Nazareth hills to the sea; drawing an income therefrom of two hundred thousand dollars a year, but, alas! exercising a despotic power over the five thousand fellahin, or peasants, out of whose toll they wring their immense profits. In Haifa and its neighbourhood the value of the land has increased threefold within the last five years, and the population has doubled, with a corresponding growth of import and export trade. The restless and predatory Bedouins are being steadily pushed east of the Jordan; the few still remaining on the southern margin of the plain are all reduced to subjection by inexorable landlords, who charge exorbitant rents for the ground upon which their black tents are pitched, and force them to pay in hard cash or go thence. Greater indeed, almost absolute, security has consequently come to the villagers; and to-day the plain of Esdraelon is "like a green lake of waving wheat, with its village-crowned mounds rising from it like islands; and it presents one of the most striking pictures of luxuriant fertility which it is possible to conceive."

Among the foreign elements which affect the welfare of the country is a religious body called "The Temple Society," which has a thousand of its members established as colonists at Haifa, Jaffa, Saron, and in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. For twelve years the colonists struggled with the unwilling Government for the legalization of the titles to their lands, but though almost entirely men of moderate means, they have succeeded in establishing their rights, the time of weary contest with a rotten government and thieving tax-gatherers is now happily past, and its largest settlement holds its seven hundred acres of fine arable and vine lands beneath the shadow of Carmel; and with its white stone houses set in the midst of trim gardens and cultivated fields, presents a singular bit of Western civilization and enterprise amidst semi-barbarous surroundings. The effect of the presence of these sturdy German farmers and craftsmen upon the neighbourhood and population is very marked; new stone houses have sprung up in all directions; omnibuses, owned and driven by natives, run several times a day along

the ten miles of firm sea-beach between Haifa and Acre, the capital of the province; and the colonists have themselves constructed a carriage road to Nazareth, twenty-two miles away, at an expenditure of about one thousand dollars.

Of deeper interest, perhaps, is the existence of some seven or eight Jewish colonies which have succeeded in establishing themselves in the land of their forefathers in spite of huge difficulties persistently thrown in their way by the Government. They are composed of Russian and Roumanian refugees, who, seeking to escape from the injustice and persecution they suffered in those countries, have turned in hope to their ancient inheritance.

It is satisfactory to find that Jewish colonists can succeed as agriculturists, and that they blend amicably with the native population; for on the thousand acres of the Jewish settlement on the southern slopes of Carmel, they and the Moslem fellahin are associated in working the estate.

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.

One of the most interesting legends of ecclesiastical history is that of the famous Seven Sleepers. According to the legend, they were seven Christian youths of Ephesus, who, during the persecution of the Christians under the Emperor Decius, fled from their enemies and concealed themselves in a large cavern near the city. Their names were John, Malchus, Apollon, Denis, Martinian, Constantine, and Maximian. Their persecutors, after much searching, discovered them, and walled up the entrance to the cavern, hoping to starve them to death. A miracle, however, was interposed on their behalf, and instead of starving, they fell into a sleep, and slept for nearly two hundred years.

The concealment is supposed to have

taken place in 250 or 251, and they did not awaken until the reign of Theodosius II., 447. Upon awakening, they were greatly surprised to find the stones removed from the cavern's entrance, for they thought that their sleep had been but a single night.

Supposing the persecution still in progress, they sent one of their number into the city to purchase provisions secretly. He was amazed when he reached the city to find erected in triumph on the churches and other buildings beautiful crosses. It seemed to him but yesterday that he had seen the cross the object of bitter hatred and ridicule; but a few hours before any one who dared to utter the name of Jesus was sorely persecuted, and now he heard it spoken on every side with love and reverence.

His strange dress, manner, and language at once attracted the attention of the people of the city, and they gathered about him to hear his story. When their wonderful history became known the Emperor Theodosius, the Bishop of Ephesus, the clergy and magistrates immediately visited the cavern of the Seven Sleepers and conducted them in triumph into the city. After invoking a blessing on the city, the Seven Sleepers all peacefully expired at the same moment.

HOW TO GET THE MOST GOOD OUT OF BOOKS.

BY CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

You should treat a book as you would a person with whom you are talking for information; that is, question it, read it over, and turn back and try to get at the meaning; if the book itself does not answer the questions you raise, go to some other book, ask a dictionary or encyclopaedia for an explanation. And if the book treated in this way does not teach you anything or does not inspire you, it is of no more service to you than the conversation of a dull, ignorant person. I just used the word "inspire." You do not read all books for facts or for information merely, but to be inspired, to have your thoughts lifted up to noble ideas, to have your sympathies touched, your ambition awakened to do some worthy or great thing, to become a man or a woman of character and consideration in the world. You read the story of a fine action or a heroic character—the death of Socrates, or the voyage of Columbus, or the sacrifice of Nathan Hale, or such a poem as "The Lady of the Lake"—not for information only, but to create in you a higher ideal of life, and to give you sympathy with your fellows and with noble purposes. You cannot begin too young to have these ideals and these purposes, and therefore the best literature in all the world is best for you to begin with. And you will find it the most interesting.



THE PATIENT CAMEL.



PLOUGHING IN PALESTINE.