

NO TIME; OR, MASON EARLE'S PARADOX.

(By Rev. W. M. Blackburn, in Sabbath at Home for July.)

CHAPTER I.

"Why don't white man hoe his corn? Weeds choke him dead," said an Indian to a careless farmer.

"I have no time," was the reply. "I must cut my hay while the sun shines, and get ready for wheat harvest."

"*You have all the time there is,*" said the Indian very coolly. A wiser remark was never made by a philosopher. Plato would have made it the text for a lecture.

This was one of the standing anecdotes of Schoolmaster Hale. The new pupils, who did not hear it within three days after entering his school must have been deaf. Those who had heard it for the twentieth time playfully called it "the essence of Indian wisdom." It was firmly rooted in the memory of Mason Earle, a bright lad whose father thought that a high degree of knowledge was quite dangerous to honesty and industry. He would often say, "I do not wish to have my sons learn so much that they will know how to live by their wits. They must *work* for a living." His notion was that nobody ever did much real work except farmers and mechanics. If he had been placed, for a little while, in the store of the merchant, in the office of the lawyer, in the school of the teacher, in the chair of the editor, in the desk of the statesman, in the study of the minister, or the circuit of the physician, he might have found out that some other people were hard at earnest, honest work as well as himself. Still his narrow ideas did not offend his neighbors; for they respected him as a generous Christian, and they could trust him with uncounted gold. The shade of his trees and the good cheer of his house were very inviting to the villagers, who often walked out to his farm-house in strawberry time, or in the winter, when pecks of apples and volumes of stories gave life to the company that sat before the evening fire.

Why should Mason Earle think of being anything else than a farmer? And yet he did. He was not an idle boy. "He's a great worker," said his mother. "He helps me wonder-

fully, when I am tired, and the supper-table must be cleared. If Satan has some mischief for idle hands to do, he don't get a chance at Mason. And he reads! Why, he has knocked the dust off his grandfather's old books, and he pores over them as if they were as new as the last story-books. He says 'the old is better,' and I think it is. There's the Pilgrim's Progress, and a Church History, and—"

"Does he ever read novels?" asked the visitor.

Mrs. Earle set her face like a flint and looked astonished. She lifted her glasses, as if she would hear better, or see what was meant. Perhaps she had not understood the question. At best, she ought not to take it as an insult.

"Novels, do you say?" she inquired. If one had crept into her house, she would have hunted it into the fire.

"Of course I do not mean romances," replied the visitor, changing her tack; "but those stories made up of nothing. They call them religious novels."

"It must be a novel religion that they teach. Mason does not read them: he has not time."

"What does he do on Sundays? I wish I knew how to keep my children out of mischief on that day."

"Do!" exclaimed Mrs. Earle. "He don't read religious novels, that is sure. He goes to Sunday-school and to church, and reads the Bible so as to get through it once every year."

"Indeed! my children have not time for that."

"If you kept them busier, they would find time enough."

This was Mrs. Earle's paradox. She taught it to Mason from his infancy. He added it to "the essence of Indian wisdom." It was to be his rule through life. We credit it to him, because he showed how it worked.

Mason often read the old books aloud to his mother, after saving time by being busy and earnest. Many a Latin foot-note puzzled him. "Maybe it's something not fit to be in English," said his mother in her simplicity.

"No: it's something very deep and learned," he replied. "I wish I knew Latin." His good mother began to wish so too, and they talked of how it might be learned. It re-