

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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GRACE BEFORE MEALS.

WHEN we remember that it is only through God's mercy that we possess anything at all, it is only right that we should return thanks for his so many and bountiful gifts. We never think of taking a present from a friend without saying at least "thank you, very much," or something of the sort. Of course, we can hardly stop and offer up a prayer of thanksgiving to God for every gift of his; for, if we did this we should be praying all day. This would indeed be "praying without ceasing," but God does not mean us to do this *outwardly* at any rate, though he likes us always to have that thankful spirit which recognizes him as the giver of all good gifts. It seems, however, that the least we can do is to offer up a few short words of thanks for the gift of those precious necessities of life, without which the body would not be able to exist. And in the same way we should return thanks for the gift of his holy Word, without which the life of the soul could not be kept alive; and this is far more important than the body. Even little children should always be taught to say a short grace before meals, and in our cut we see a well-brought-up little girl thanking her heavenly Father for the good gifts on the table.

THE MOLE AND HIS WAYS.

REV. J. G. WOOD, the celebrated author in natural history, delivered a lecture in Cooper Institute, New York, on the mole. He said in part:

If a man were placed in a damp, dark, subterranean prison he would not like it a bit, but would make the best of his way as quickly as he could to the air, the light, and the warmth of the upper world. Moles do not agree at all with human beings, but prefer coldness, moisture, and darkness. The mole is a burrower, and in the natural pursuit of his vocation—devouring the pupa of caterpillars, and also ground-worms—he is compelled to throw up those little hills. Farmers strongly object to them on this ground, because molehills look untidy. Then, they have a lurking prejudice that they also do damage to the crops, which is nonsense, because the mole is strictly insectivorous and carnivorous, and utterly disdains cereals or roots. He is really a benefactor, because he supplies the farmer with a top-dressing of unexhausted earth.

All burrowers must be cylindrical and pointed at the foremost end, and that is the shape of the mole. He is intermediate in size between a mouse and a rat; and his anatomy is highly interesting from the manner in which all the muscular power goes to the forearm, which does the burrowing, and the spade-like hands with the long claws. Anatomists at one time were greatly puzzled by what appeared to be a sixth finger, which would have been a terrible anomaly. Fortunately it was discovered to be not a finger, but a radial sesamoid, of which the human anatomy contains numerous instances—as, for example, the kneecap. It was for the purpose

of extending the forking power of the mole's hand. When an honest agriculturist comes to a bit of hard ground he first loosens it with a fork, and then shovels. The mole does exactly the same. When he opens his fingers as wide as he can he does the forking business; when he closes them compactly he shovels. I have seen at an agricultural fair a very smart digging

Then, by blowing away the fur, a small, black speck appears, which is the eye. But the best way is to put the mole in water, when the eye immediately appears, showing that he has the power of projecting the eye beyond the fur. The same proverbial wisdom that made the mole blind gives it credit for a sense of hearing singularly delicate; yet the fact is, that the ears are

ODD BOOKS.

In some countries, leaves of trees are still used for books. In Ceylon, the leaves of the talipot, a tree common on that island, are used for a similar purpose. The talipot tree belongs to the palm family. It grows to be about a hundred feet high, is straight, and has no real branches. When very old the tree blossoms, and dies after ripening its fruit. The tree blooms but once. The leaves used for books are cut by the natives before they spread open, and are of a pale brownish yellow, a color they retain for ages.

The characters are impressed upon the leaf, and are rubbed over with charcoal to make them show more plainly. The leaves are then strung together between covers of board or some less common material.

Early writers made use of linen or cotton fabrics, of skins, and even of scales of fishes, for writing. For a long period papyrus was used, the books being made in rolls about one and a half feet wide and sometimes fifty feet long. Papyrus was a flag, or bulrush, growing eight or ten feet high, found in the marshes of Egypt. From its inner pith the form of paper called papyrus was made. A most extraordinary papyrus was discovered at Memphis, supposed to be more than three thousand years old. It measured one hundred feet in length. It is a "funeral roll," and is preserved in the British Museum. Papyrus sheets were neatly joined, attached to a stick, and on it rolled up (whence we have our word "volume," from the Latin *volvere* (to roll). The titles were written on tags attached to the sticks, or inscribed on the outside of the rolls. The rolls were kept in round wooden boxes resembling the old-fashioned handboxes, and could easily be carried about.

When the literary jealousy of the Egyptians caused them to stop the supply of papyrus, the king of Pergamos, a city in Asia Minor, introduced the use of sheepskin in a form called, from the place of its invention, *pergamona*, whence our word "parchment" is believed to be derived. Vellum, a finer article made from calfskin, was also used. Many of the books done on vellum in the middle ages were transcribed by monks, and often it took years to complete a single copy.

Books consisting of two or three leaves of lead, thinly covered with wax, on which they wrote with an iron pen or stylus, the leaves being joined by iron rings or by ribbons, were also used by the ancients.

When the first libraries were established in England, books were so rare and valuable that they were usually attached to the shelves by iron chains to prevent their being stolen.

A fashion of expensive binding prevailed a long time; and great skill was exhibited in bindings ornamented by embroidery and various styles of needlework. Queen Elizabeth carried about with her, suspended by a golden chain, a book called "The Golden Manual of Prayer," bound in gold. On one side was a representation of "the judgment of Solomon;" on the other side was the brazen serpent with the wounded Israel-



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machine; but upon examining it I found it to be only the mole's hands multiplied and set on wheels.

The mole has eyes but he does not use them very much. Shakespeare speaks repeatedly of the blind mole; but the sweet bard of Avon was incorrect. The mole is not blind, but his eyes are exceedingly small. If any person wants to find out for himself he must first find his mole, which is no joke; for they bite like fiends, and scratch with their forepaws like wild-cats.

not specially acute. The delicacy of hearing is due to the singular manner in which the earth carries wave sounds, a circumstance well known to hunters and military men. The sense of smell is the pre-eminent quality in this creature, and is that upon which he depends chiefly to secure food. Moles are fierce to the last degree, and extremely quarrelsome. Whenever two moles of similar sex meet they will fight; and the vanquished is always destroyed by the victor.