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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, JUNE 10, 1893.

AN OPEN LETTER TO BOYS.

BY META LANDER.

II.

THERE is another point to which I want to call your attention, for some of you will by-and-bye desire to get situations as book-keepers, or to become art students. Professor Oliver, of the Naval Academy, says he can invariably recognize the user of tobacco "from his tremulous hand and absolute inability to draw a clean, straight line." I know of a merchant, who used to test the handwriting of every boy who applied to him for a situation, and in this way always detected tobacco users and sent them away.

Now, I want to say some things about cigarettes, which are becoming more and more the delight of boys, and which, according to tobacconists who ought to know, "are coming to overshadow all other branches of the business."

Do you care to know how they are made? I think I can enlighten you. An Italian boy only eight years old was brought before a justice in New York City as a vagrant, or, in other words, a young tramp. But what did the officer charge him with doing? Only with picking up cigar-stumps from the streets and gutters. To prove this, he showed the boy's basket, half full of stumps, water-soaked and covered with mud.

"What do you do with these?" asked his Honour. What do you think was his answer? "I sell them to a man for ten cents a pound, to be used in making cigarettes." Not a particularly agreeable piece of information, is it, boys?

In our large cities there are a great many cigar-butt grubbers, as they are called. It certainly is not a pretty name, though very

appropriate; for it is applied to boys and girls who scour the streets in search of half-burnt cigars and stumps, which are dried and then sold to be used in making cigarettes.

But this isn't all, nor even the worst of it. These cigarettes have been analyzed; and physicians and chemists were surprised to find how much opium is put into them. A tobacconist himself says that "the extent to which drugs are used in cigarettes is appalling." "Havana flavouring" for this same purpose is sold everywhere by the thousand barrels. This flavouring is made from the tonka-bean, which contains a deadly poison. The wrappers, warranted to be rice paper, are sometimes made of common paper, and sometimes of the filthy scrapings of rag-pickers bleached white with arsenic. What a cheat

to be practised on people! Think of it, boys, the next time you take up a cigarette, and drop it—as you would a coal of fire. The latter would simply burn your fingers; but this burns up good health, good resolutions, good manners, good memories, good faculties, and often honesty and truthfulness as well.

A bright boy of thirteen came under the spell of cigarettes. He grew stupid and subject to nervous twitchings, till finally he was obliged to give up his studies. When asked why he didn't throw away his miserable cigarettes, the poor boy replied, with tears, that he had often tried to do so, but could not.

Another boy of eleven was made crazy by cigarette smoking, and was taken to an insane asylum in Orange County, N.Y. He was regarded as a violent and dangerous maniac, exhibiting some of the symptoms peculiar to hydrophobia.

The white spots on the tongue and inside the cheeks, called smoker's patches, are thought by Sir Morell Mackenzie to be more common with users of cigarettes than with other smokers.

"Does cigarette-smoking injure the lungs?" asked some one of a leading New York physician. For his answer, the doctor lighted a cigarette, and inhaling a mouthful of smoke, blew it through a corner of his handkerchief which he held tightly over his mouth. A dark-brown stain was distinctly visible. "Just such a stain," said the doctor, "is left upon the lungs." If you ever smoke another cigarette, think of the stains you are making.

There is a disease called the cigarette eye, which is regarded as dangerous. A film comes over the eye, appearing and disappearing at intervals. And did you know that boys had been made blind by smoking cigarettes? How would you like to part with your sight, and never again behold the light of day or the faces of your friends?

Shall I give you two or three pictures? A writer greatly interested in young people—Josiah Leeds—describes a pitiful spectacle which he saw—a pale, woe-begone boy, seemingly less than ten years old, standing at the entrance of an alley, without a hat, his dilapidated trousers very ragged at the knees, his hands in his pockets, shivering with cold, yet whiffing away at a cigarette.

Dr. Hammond says: "I saw, in Washington, a wretched-looking child, scarcely five years old, smoking a cigarette and blowing the smoke from his nostrils. His pale, pinched face was twitching convulsively, his little shoulders were bent, and his whole appearance was that of an old man."

Cases of epilepsy, insanity, and death are frequently reported as the result of smoking cigarettes, while such physicians as Dr. Lewis Sayre, Dr. Hammond, and Sir Morell Mackenzie, of England, name heart-trouble, blindness, cancer, and other diseases as occasioned by it.

We also learn that several leading physicians in Philadelphia unanimously condemn cigarette-smoking as "one of the vilest and most destructive evils that ever befell the youth of any country," declaring that "its direct tendency is a deterioration of the race."

What can we do, dear boys, to protect you against this dreadful foe? How can I adequately set forth the perils of this tobacco-habit, to which you are drawn, not only by the example and the persuasions and sometimes the ridicule of other boys,

but by various snares set for your unwary feet?

Would that I could persuade you not even to glance at the temptation which comes in offers of pictures—if only you comply with certain miserable conditions.

"If!"

Will you not settle that "if"

now and forever with an emphatic No?

Will you not deliberately resolve: "I will never touch another cigarette; I will never use tobacco in any form?" This will be your best gift to a loving mother and sister. And it would give me greater pleasure than I can express to receive such a pledge from you. I would put your names down in a book and keep it always as a precious memorial.

FARMING IN CHINA.



FARMING SCENE IN CHINA.

[We have pleasure in printing herewith, a number of interesting articles on "Farming in West China," by one of our devoted missionaries in that country. They will be followed with great interest by our readers—Ed.]

West China produces in her more fertile regions four crops in a year.

Sze-Chuan is considered the most fertile province in China, and the amount of produce she is capable of putting upon the market to feed her millions is simply marvellous.

In Central China, along the great water highway, home impressions of the fertility of the soil and the occupations of every possible inch for production receives a severe shock. Long stretches of territory visible in low water as well as higher tracts are unused or indifferently cultivated. The west however fulfils the highest expectation. So anxious are the Westerners to produce that they scrape the rocks and make beds of earth of various sizes in the hollows. Thus green patches of vegetables often greet the eye, high up barren hillsides, forming pleasant contrasts with the dark, frowning rocks.

Three things characterize the Western Chinese farmers. They thoroughly work the soil, keep their farms clean and tidy; and carefully transform everything into fertilizers.

The plains for miles resemble a well-kept vegetable garden. A weed has but to show its head to lose it. Two instruments are used in working the soil, the plough and the ubiquitous hoe.

Chinese ploughs are very primitive, such as might have been used in Abraham's time. It consists of a handle, a beam and a slightly curved iron ploughshare nailed to a shaft. The whole outfit stands thus—A Chinaman with one hand holds the plough, with the other flourishes a whip, while from his mouth a hissing sound proceeds which answers to our chirp. The plough is attached to a cross-bar which in turn is fastened by rope traces to a wooden hame around the neck of a powerful-looking creature called the Water Buffalo, whose long soraggy horns lie parallel with his back, giving him a wild look, and whose nose sniffs the air as soon as a foreigner comes within smelling distance. The peculiar odour that emanates from a foreigner—this is not intended to reflect upon the cleanliness of foreigners—is quite repulsive to these animals, who take their bath regularly, and one of two impulses fills their breasts—either to rush at the stranger or hasten from his presence.

A Chinese plough makes a furrow about six inches deep and five wide. The hoe is the most conspicuous farming implement in Western China. Men usually work in companies. A dozen men stand in a row and their hoes keep time as they dash them into the soil. Women are not exempt from this labour, especially if they have large feet.

The grain is cut with a large, slightly curved knife, bound up into sheaves and placed in stooks. The threshing machine is a very simple arrangement. A heavy box two feet high is carried into the field.

The threshers take up a small bundle of grain and dash it against the inside of the box. This is repeated until all the grain is loosened from the stalks. One cannot help but contrast the advancement of civilized nations in time and labour-saving machines, with the primitive style of the Chinese. Standing on the plains near Brandon, Manitoba, the writer saw a steam thresher pouring forth a bag of wheat a minute. On the Chen-tu Plains two men would scarcely thresh a bag in half a day. The grain is cleaned in the old-fashioned way, by tossing into the air and permitting the breezes to carry off the chaff. It was a surprise and also a pleasure, while passing through some districts to find that some one had seen a western fanning-mill, and had constructed a few as nearly like it as memory would permit. China is slow to begin improvements, but that there is a movement in her stagnant waters is quite evident from the many foreign things that are yearly being introduced and utilized.

GEO. E. HARTWELL.

A Modern Prodigal.

BY

Mrs. Julia McNair Wright.

CHAPTER V.

ACHILLES STILL MOURNS PATROCLUS.

SLOWLY went the days with the prisoner. The seasons changed and he scarcely knew it. Sometimes from the prison-yard he lifted his eyes to a sky of steadfast summer blue, or caught a waft of air from meadows newly mown. The violets of April were forgotten in the splendour of the roses of June, the roses were supplanted by the regal pomp of the dahlias; ripened grain succeeded to ripened grass; the birds, which had sung the pæans of their return, now sung their "wa gang" lyrics sad and clear, and in the slow monotony of his prison Thomas Stanhope held no communion with nature in those changeable pageants. His communion was with his own heart, and with the past. Penitence is a salutary, but not a joyful, mood of the soul; in its deeper shadows lies that intense bitter remorse which is the penitence of the world without hope. So, marked only by change of labour, by the recurrence of meals, by the hours of going to bed and getting up again, moved the days of Thomas Stanhope. As he worked, what ghosts of past opportunities wasted, of happiness and fortune squandered, rose to mock and rebuke him! A good name, plenty of friends, a modest little competence, a home, a fair, kind wife, children of good promise—to thee he had sacrificed all these, O Moloch of alcohol! How he gnashed his teeth, remembering what had been, and what might have been. Love, honour, fortune, home, all ended in—a ten years' sentence. However, there are some of our perverse human race who will have none of a door of hope, except in the valley of Achor, and when youth is past.

Meanwhile, this being the fortune of the prisoner, what was the fortune of his home?

Mercy in her sorrow and apathy of misery found herself seized and carried along by the strong currents of her children's hopeful energy. These children had the vigorous nature of old Deacon Stanhope, full of indomitable zeal, fond of work, of triumphing by main strength over adverse fate. They were in the rebound of the first freedom, the first possibilities of their lives. All the want and mortification and loss of their past stung them to acquire something for themselves, to have, and to