

At School.

We are all at school in this world of ours,
And our lessons lie plain before us;
But we will not learn, and the flying
hours
And the days and the years pass o'er us.

And then we grumble and mourn and say
That our school is so tiresome and
weary.

And we ask for a long, bright holiday,
That will banish our lessons dreary.

But what is it God is trying to teach?
Is it patience or faith or kindness?
Is the lesson really beyond our reach
Or made hard through our wilful blind-
ness?

If we were in earnest and tried to learn—
If our listless study we mended—
Who knows but our holiday we would
earn

And our schooldays be gladly ended?

Who knows but we make our lessons
long

And hinder their meaning from reach-
ing

The hearts that would be full of joyous
song,

If we knew what our God was teaching?

Then let us study his will while we may:
There's a warning for us in the rule
That the scholars who will not learn all
day

Are the ones that are kept after school.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

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HEAVEN BOUND.

The train was going west, and the time was evening. At a station a little girl about eight years old came aboard carrying a little budget under her arm. She came into a car and deliberately took a seat. She then commenced an eager scrutiny of faces, but all were strange to her. She appeared weary, and, placing her budget for a pillow, prepared to try to get a little sleep. Soon the conductor came along collecting tickets and fares. Observing him, she asked if she might lie there. The gentlemanly conductor replied that she might, when the following conversation took place. Said the conductor: "Where are you going?"

She answered: "I am going to heaven."

He asked again: "Who pays your fare?"

She then said: "Mister, does this railroad lead to heaven, and does Jesus travel on it?"

He said: "I think not. Why did you think so?"

"Why, sir, before my ma died she used to sing of Jesus on the heavenly railroad, and he pays the fare for everybody, and the train stopped at every station to take people on board; but my ma don't sing to me any more. Nobody sings to me now, and I thought that I would take the car and go to ma. Mister, do you sing to your little girl about heaven; you've a little girl, haven't you?"

He replied: "No, my little dear, I have no little girl now. I had one once, but she died some time ago, and went to heaven."

Again she asked: "Did she go over this railroad; and are you going to see her now?"

By this time every person in the coach was upon his feet, and most of them were weeping. An attempt to describe what I witnessed is almost futile. Some said: "God bless the dear little girl!"

Hearing some person say that she was an angel, the little girl earnestly replied: "Yes, my ma used to say that I would be an angel some time." Addressing herself to the conductor, she asked him: "Do you love Jesus? I do, and if you love him he will let you ride on his railroad. I am going to heaven, and I wish that you would go with me. I know that Jesus will let me in when I get there, and will let you in too, and everybody who rides on his railroad—yes, all these people. Wouldn't you like to see heaven and Jesus and your little girl?" These words, so innocently and pathetically uttered, brought a rush of tears to all eyes, but most profusely from the eyes of the conductor. Some who were travelling on the heavenly road shouted aloud for joy. She now asked the conductor: "Mister, may I lie here until we get to heaven?"

He replied: "Yes, dear, yes."

"Will you wake me up then, so that I can see my ma, your little girl, and Jesus? for I do want to see them all."

The answer came in broken accents, but in words tenderly spoken: "Yes, dear angel, yes. God bless you!"

"Amen!" was sobbed by more than a score of voices.

Turning her eyes again upon the conductor, the child interrogated him again: "What shall I tell your little girl when I see her? Shall I tell her that I saw her pa on Jesus' railroad? Shall I?"

This brought fresh floods of tears from all present, and the conductor knelt by her side, and, embracing her, wept the reply that he could not utter. At this juncture the brakeman called out: "H—s." The conductor arose and requested him to attend to his (the conductor's) duty at the station, for he was engaged. That was a precious place. I thank God that I witnessed this scene, but I was sorry that at this point I had to leave the train.

THE USE OF BURRS.

After a stroll afield, in the fall, one is apt to wonder, as he works away at the burrs that cover his clothes, what use they can possibly be. Burrs are a great nuisance to men and animals; but the plants they grow on find them very serviceable, for they are simply fruits covered with spines or prickles; and this is only another way plants have to distribute their seeds. That it is a scheme that works well any one can see who has a hunting-dog, and keeps it in his yard. In the spring fine crops of Spanish needles and clot-burrs come up as if by magic, where there were none before. They have grown from the burrs the dog brought home in his coat the autumn before. Around woollen mills in New England, plants from the west spring up in a mysterious way, and nearly always these have burr-fruits. They have grown from the burrs taken from the fleeces of sheep, in cleaning, and thrown out as waste. Some troublesome weeds have been introduced in this manner. On the prairies there are many plants with this kind of fruit. In former days, when great herds of buffalo roamed the plains, their hair caught up these burrs, which thus stole long rides, like the tramps they are. Even now, in old buffalo-wallows, plants are found that do not grow elsewhere in the country round.

Some burrs, like Spanish needles, have only three or four slender spines, or awns, as they are called, at the summit of the fruit. If we look at them through a magnifying-glass, we find them bearing sharp, downward-pointing barbs, like that of a fish-hook. The sand-spur, an ill weed that grows on sea-beaches, and sandy-river banks, has burrs covered with such spines. The boy who has stepped on sand-spurs with his bare feet knows this to his sorrow. The tiny barbs go in easily, but every attempt to draw them out make them tear into the flesh.

Often the spines or bristles are hooked instead of being barbed. The clet-burr, or cockle-burr, that grows abundantly in waste ground, and the agrimony of our woods, are examples. Burdock has such hooked prickles on its fruits, and they stick so fast together, that children make of them neat little baskets, handles and all. The tick-trefoil has jointed pods, covered thickly with small hooked hairs that can hardly be seen without a magnifying-glass. These are the small flat, brown burrs that cover the clothing after a walk through the woods in September. They are most annoying burrs, worse than clot-burrs, they are so small and tick so fast.—November St. Nicholas.

THE IMMENSE SIZE OF THE SUN.

TO JOURNEY ACROSS IT BY TRAIN WOULD TAKE TWO YEARS AND A HALF.

The sun, provided we measure only the disk seen with the smoked glass, is eight hundred and sixty-six thousand miles in diameter, i.e., one hundred and eight earths could be comfortably ranged side by side across the disk. To cover the surface would require many thousands. To fill the interior we should need one million three hundred thousand. On a smaller scale we might represent the sun by a ball two feet in diameter and the earth by a good-sized grain of shot. Let the sun be hollowed out, then place the earth at its centre, and let the moon revolve about it at its real distance of two hundred and forty thousand miles. There would yet remain nearly two hundred thousand miles of space between the moon's orbit and the inclosing shell of the sun. Indeed, to journey from one side of the sun to the other, through the centre, would take one of our swift express trains nearly two years and a half. So vast a globe must be heavy. Since its density is only one-quarter that of the earth, it only weighs as much as three hundred and thirty-two thousand earths, or two octillions of tons! The attraction of gravity on its surface would cause a man whose weight was one hundred and fifty pounds to weigh two tons.—Alden W. Quimby, in Ladies' Home Journal.

WINGED SEEDS.

THE WIND PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE SPREADING OF PLANTS.

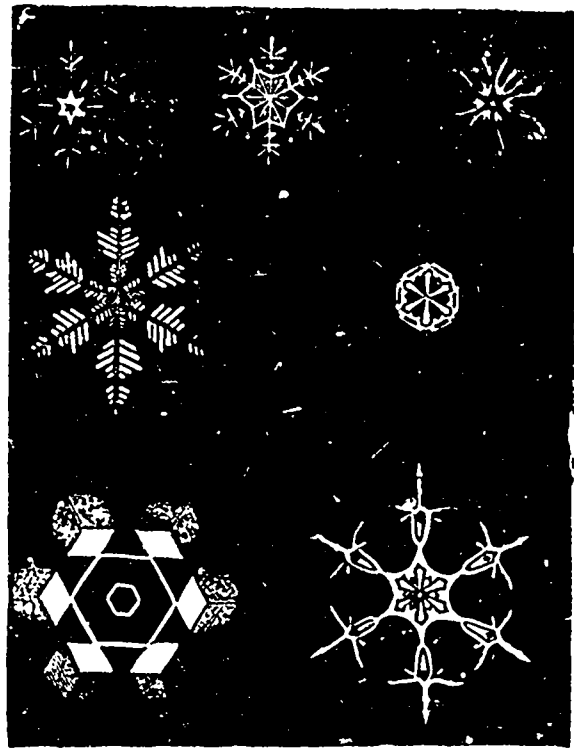
The usual way for seeds to be carried is by the wind. Sometimes they are so small and light as to be easily wafted by the breezes. This is the case of the seed of the moccasin-flowers and meadow-pinks, and the other beautiful plants of our woods and bogs called orchids. And the tiny bodies, like atoms of dust, termed "spores," that answer to seed in ferns and mosses and toadstools, are borne away by the lightest breath of air. But most seeds are themselves too heavy for this. So they are oftentimes provided with thin, broad wings that carry them before the wind as a sail carries a boat. The pairs of "keys" that hang in clusters from the maple-trees in spring are such winged fruits. When ripe they float slowly to the ground, or if a high wind is blowing, they are carried farther from the tree. The ash has thick bunches of winged fruits much like these, but single. The elm has a thin, papery border all around its small seeds, which makes them quite conspicuous as they hang on the branchlets before the leaves have come out.

Numbers of plants have about the seeds delicate hairs or bristles that take the place of wings. A dandelion "clock," or a head of thistle-down, is a bunch of seeds, each with a circle of fine bristles on the summit. When the seeds are ripe, along comes a breeze, and puff! away go the seeds, hanging from their tufts of bristles, as the basket hangs from a balloon. The bunches of long silky hairs that come from a bursting pod of milk-weed, and fill the air around, have each their precious cargo in the shape of a small, brown seed. The seeds that ripen in heads on the clematis, after the handsome purple flower-leaves have fallen, have long feathered tails, like slender bird-plumes, that do the same work that is given to the silk of milkweed. The "cotton" around the seeds of the willows at the riverside and of the poplars along city streets serves the same useful purpose. Cotton itself is only a bunch of fine white hair around the seed. Ages before men thought of spinning it, and weaving it into cloth, it was making itself useful to the cotton-plant by helping to scatter its seed.—"How Plants Spread," in November St. Nicholas.

When we have a keen eye for the faults of others, we are apt to be blind to our own.

A right state of heart cannot be maintained, without keeping a close watch on the tongue.

It ought to be a matter of principle with the Christian to praise the Lord, whether he feels like it or not.



SNOW FLOWERS.

Snow is composed of great numbers of very small ice-crystals! Hence snow is crystallized ice. If you look at snow-flakes with the naked eye they all look nearly alike, and have no special interest or beauty except their purity and whiteness. But look again at them, and this time through a strong microscope. Behold, what beautiful forms! They surpass diamonds in their exquisite shapes, and almost equal them in the brilliant flashing of the light. There are perfectly-formed crystals, appearing in a great variety of shapes. How delicately the fine angles are shaped! How unlike each succeeding form seems! But look again for the third time. Behold, there is a likeness one to the other. This one has six points; that one has the same number. Some look like six broad leaves held by their stems and forming a circular flower; others seem to be three prisms laid across each other to form a six-pointed star. Still others have the form of six cubic crystals attached by their corners to a six-sided plate or crystal. Then there are the most tiny and delicate crystal-like leaves, some pinnate, some lanceolate like a spear-head; others have fine spear-like stems, six of them joined at the centre and feathered at their sides. "How beautiful!" you exclaim. Oh, yes, you are just beginning to learn what snow is. Professor Tyndall calls a snow-storm a "shower of frozen flowers." Some of these flowers are nearly an inch wide, but usually they are much smaller. Perhaps the smaller ones are more beautiful than the larger ones.

Dr. Scoresby made a very careful study of snow-crystals while he was in the arctic regions. He discovered and made drawings of nearly one hundred different forms of these crystal flowers. He divided them into three classes. The first he called "lamellar;" that is, they were composed of thin plates, layers, or scales. The second class he called "spicular;" that is, they had points like a dart. The third class he called "pyramidal," because they were built up apparently like a pyramid, having six sides. Professor Green, Mr. Glaisher, and Professor Tyndall have given much attention to these beautiful crystals of snow, and Mr. Glaisher discovered that the primary figure of each crystal was a star having six points, or it was a hexagonal or six-sided scale or plate. The compound figures were of very great variety. The illustrations given herewith are from Mr. Glaisher's drawings. There were curious combinations of darts, prisms, cubes, rhomboids,—that is, oblique-angled parallelograms,—all arranged around a central figure in the most artistic and wonderful manner. No florist or artist ever made a more beautifully arranged bouquet than is to be found in these complex snow-crystals, made in the laboratory of the skies, and presided over by the Creator of all things. Professor Tyndall says "snow-crystals formed in calm atmosphere are built up on the same type." The little atoms of snow arrange themselves so as to form six-pointed stars. Then from the central nucleus, or point, there shoot out six spiculae, or darts. Every two of these rays or darts are separated by an angle of exactly sixty degrees. From these long darts smaller darts shoot out, and these too are separated from each other by exactly the same angle as are the longer ones. And from these shorter darts still others spring out at their side.