

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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The Mysterious Guests.

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I had three friends. I asked one day
That they would dine with me.
But when they came I found that they
Were six instead of three.

My good wife whispered, "We, at best,
But five can hope to dine,
Send one away." I did. The rest
Remaining numbered nine.

"I too will go," the second cried,
He left at once, and then,
Although to count but eight I tried,
There were remaining ten

"Go call them back," my wife implored,
"I fear the third may go,
And leave behind, to share our board,
Perhaps a score or so."

The second one then straight returned,
As might have been expected;
He with the ten, we quickly learned,
Eleven made. Dejected,

We saw the first returning; he,
With all the rest turned round,
And there, behold, were my friends three,
Though six they still were found.

(For those of you who yet may find
My riddle too complex,
I'll say the friends I have in mind
Were "S" and "I" and "X.")

LOOKING UP "THE TOWER."

Excess of ceremony was the old expedient for making power venerable. In these more practical days it often makes power ridiculous. A good deal of form and etiquette, however, are doubtless necessary in official places; at all events there is likely to be a good deal, especially under imperial governments—and the poor fellows who hold the places, and whose duties are chiefly traditional, must do something to earn their salary. It is no very great affair for a smart man or boy to leak the doors of a building, but the Government of England makes a very solemn and deliberate job of it. Large bodies move slowly.

Few persons are aware of the strictness with which the Tower of London is guarded from foes without and from treachery within. The ceremony of shutting it up every night continues to be as solemnly and as rigidly precautionary as if the French invasion were actually afoot.

Immediately after "tattoo" all strangers are expelled, and the gates once closed, nothing short of such imperative necessity as fire or sudden illness can procure their being re-opened till the appointed hour the next morning.

The ceremony of locking up is very ancient, curious and stately. A few minutes before the clock strikes the hour of eleven,—on Tuesdays and Fridays twelve—the head warden (yeoman porter), clothed in a long red cloak, bearing in his hand a huge bunch of keys, and attended by a brother-warden carrying a gigantic lantern, appears in front of the main guard-house, and calls out in a loud voice:

"Escort keys!"

At these words the sergeant of the guard, with five or six men, turns out and follows him to the "Spur," an outer gate, each sentry challenging, as they pass the post,—

"Who goes there?"

"Keys."

"Whose keys?"

"Queen Victoria's keys."

"Advance, Queen Victoria's keys, and all's well."

The yeoman porter then exclaims,—

"God bless Queen Victoria!"

The main guard devoutly respond,—

"Amen!"

The officer on duty gives the word,—

"Present arms!"

The firelocks rattle; the officer kisses the hilt of his sword; the escort fall in among their companions, and the yeoman porter marches majestically across the parade alone, to deposit the keys in the lieutenant's lodgings.

The ceremony over, not only is all egress and ingress totally precluded, but even within the walls no one can stir without being furnished with the countersign, and any one who, unhappily forgetful, ventures from his quarters unprovided with this talisman, is sure to be made the prey of the first sentinel whose post he crosses.

All of which is pleasantly absurd, and reminds us of the stately manner in which the crown was carried about when the White Tower was on fire.

THE GUNPOWDER SEARCH.

It is nearly three hundred years since the British Houses of Parliament were searched, and the barrels of gunpowder under the custody of Guy Fawkes, a soldier of fortune, were discovered a few hours before the opening of the session. The Gunpowder Plot was not exposed by vigilance, but by means of a letter written by one of the conspirators to a relative, warning him against attending Parliament on the first day. If there

electric light, yet the yeomen of the guard respect the old custom and have lanterns in their hands.

Under the Stuarts it was customary, when the inspection had been finished, for the lord chamberlain to send a message to the sovereign by a mounted soldier with the information that it would be entirely safe for him to attend the opening session of Parliament.

The mounted soldier no longer rides post-haste to the Queen at Windsor or Osborne; but every year the vice-chamberlain sends the traditional message to her by private wire, and she is assured that there are no explosives in the cellars, and that she will not be exposed to unusual risks if she chooses to meet her Lords and Commons. She may not have the remotest intention of opening Parliament, but the message is received and acknowledged.

The lanterns are swung in the full glare of electric light by the yeomen of the guard because the plot of the first Guy Fawkes was unmasked by lamplight, and it is the impressive and stately method of looking for conspirators. The mounted messenger has been dispensed with, and the message is entrusted to the wires. This is the only concession made to modern progress. Otherwise the traditions of three centuries are respected in detail whenever this strange and interesting function is repeated. Youth's Companion.

HOME POLITENESS.

The boy who is polite to father and mother is likely to be polite to everybody else. A boy lacking politeness to his parents may have the semblance of courtesy in society, but is never truly polite in spirit, and is in danger, as he becomes familiar, of betraying his real want of courtesy.

We are all in danger of living too much for the outside world, for the impression we make in society, coveting the good opinion of others, and caring too little for the opinion of those who are in a sense a part of ourselves.

We say to every boy and girl, cultivate the habit of courtesy and propriety at home and you will be sure in other places to act in a becoming and attractive manner.

"DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEBODY QUICK."

Not long ago I read a story about a little girl who had a parrot. Among the funny things which this parrot could say was the line which stands at the head of this story. She had heard Madge, her little mistress, say it over and over as she learned it in a piece to recite at school. Madge did not know about this, and one morning she woke up very cross. She crawled slowly out of bed and began sulkingly to put on her shoes and stockings. She pulled so hard at the button-hook that the very first button popped off. Pretty soon off went another. This made poor, cross Madge so angry that she pulled off the shoe, flung it across the room, and screamed out: "Everything is so hateful! Oh, what shall I do?"

Polly, who was on her stand by the window, was very much excited by all this noise, and screamed back: "Bad girl! do something for somebody quick!"

This made Madge laugh, but it made her think too. She made up her mind that all that day she would try to do something for somebody, and see if that would not keep her from feeling cross. I think it did. Suppose you try Polly's cure for crossness.

The father of a family, becoming annoyed by the fault-finding of his children over their food, exclaimed in a rage one day at dinner: "You children are intolerable; you turn up your nose at everything. When I was a boy I was often glad enough to get dry bread to eat." "Poor papa!" said Rose, the pet of the family, "I am so glad that you are having such nice times now living with mamma and us."



NATIVE HIGH LEAP AT HITO.

NATIVES OF HAWAII.

When Lady Brassey, the noted traveller, reached the Sandwich Islands, she and her party visited the volcano of Kilauea, where they spent Christmas Day. The crater is a lake of fire a mile across, boiling like Acheron. "Dashing against the cliffs with a noise like the roar of a stormy ocean, waves of blood-red fiery lava tossed their spray high in the air." Returning over the lava bed, she continues: "Once I slipped, and my foot sank through the thin crust. Sparks issued from the ground, and the stick on which I leaned caught fire before I could fairly recover myself." Soon after a river of lava overflowed the ground on which they had just walked. The natives of Hawaii seem almost amphibious. On a narrow board mere boys will ride upon the wildest surf or rapids; and, for the amusement of the tourists, two natives leaped from a cliff, a hundred feet high, into the sea at its base, as shown in the picture.

was lack of official vigilance then, there has been none since, for Parliament has not been opened any year for three centuries until the cellars have been searched.

The lord chamberlain of the court is charged with the duty of examining the vents and secret passages, but ordinarily it is the vice-chamberlain who conducts the search. With him are associated the deputy sergeant-at-arms of the House of Commons, the clerk of the board of works and an inspector of police.

These four officials are preceded by four yeomen of the guard in uniform and fully armed. They tramp through one corridor after another, and look into every dark corner, and finally reach an agreement that no gunpowder has been secretly stored in the cellars, and that it is safe for Parliament to meet.

When the earliest searches were ordered during the reign of King James I., the guardsmen carried lanterns through the dark passages. The corridors and underground rooms are now flooded with