

looked upon this ring. I have remembered that it was given with the last words and dying counsels of an excellent mother, to my wife, who placed it there; under the blessing of Almighty God, it has proved, thus far, the life boat of a drowning man.

The year soon passed away, and on the very day twelvemonth on which I had put the ring upon my husband's finger, farmer Johnson brought over the Temperance book. We all sat down to the tea-table together.—After supper was over little Robert climbed and kissed his father, and turning to farmer Johnson, "Father," said he, "has not smelt like old Isaac, the drunken fiddler, once since we rode home in your yellow waggon." The farmer opened the book; husband signed the pledge of the society, and with tears in his eyes, gave me back—ten thousand times more precious than ever—MY MOTHER'S GOLD RING.

"MY MOTHER'S HAND"

"When I was a little child, my mother used to make me kneel down beside her, and place her hand upon my head while she taught me to pray. She died when I was very young, but still, when going to do wrong, I seemed to feel her soft hand upon my head. When I grew to be a man, the thought of that same hand still kept me safe."—*ANON.*

Why gaze ye on my hoary hairs,
Ye children young and gay?
Your locks, beneath the blast of care,
Will bleach as white as they.

I had a mother once, like you,
Who o'er my pillow hung;
Kissed from my cheek the briny dew,
And taught my faltering tongue.

She, when the nightly couch was spread,
Would bow my infant knee;
And place her hand upon my head,
And kneeling pray for me.

But then there came a fearful day,
I sought my mother's bed;
Till harsh hands tore me thence away,
And told me she was dead.

That eve I knelt me down in woe,
And said a lonely prayer;
Yet still my temples seemed to glow,
As if that hand were there.

Years fled and left me childhood's joy,
Gay sports and pastimes dear;
I rose a wild and wayward boy,
Who scorned the curb of fear.

Fierce passions shook me like a reed,
Yet ere at night I slept,
That soft hand made my bosom bleed,
And down I fell, and wept.

That hallowed touch was ne'er forgot,
And now, though Time hath set
His frosty seal upon my lot,
These temples feel it yet.

And if I e'er in heaven appear,
A mother's holy prayer,
A mother's hand and gentle tear,
That pointed to a Saviour, dear,
Hath led the wanderer there.—*ANON.*

ON READING.

In reading books, some young people are like the butterflies. They are looking out for stories, and, as they turn the leaves, they skip the passages which contain nothing wonderful or amusing, and, after half an hour or so, they throw away the book, and hurry out to play. But a diligent scholar goes straight on, gathering knowledge and wisdom—the honey of the mind—from every page, and storing it up for the days to come. And as the Bible is like a garden in the midst of common fields, as it contains sweet and fragrant flowers which are to be found nowhere else, he loves to go there and treasure in his memory its faithful sayings.

THE ASS.

Of all the animals that came out of the ark, the donkey is the least considered by the master whom he serves so patiently and so well. The poor beast seems to have shared the curse with Ham, and to have been banned from the beginning. We may, without incurring the charge of irreverence, imagine that Noah had a great deal of trouble with him; that he was the last to be got into the ark, and the last to be got out of it; that while Shem ascended to the back of the stately elephant; and Japhet mounted the graceful horse, Ham bestrode the humble ass, and man and beast went forth into the wilderness together, to be slighted and despised. Buffon and Cuvier both thought that the donkey was despised only because he cuts a sorry figure by comparison with the horse, and that if the latter were unknown the donkey would have had great care lavished upon him, and thus have increased in size and developed his mental powers to an extent almost impossible to imagine. Adopting this theory, we must regard the donkey as the victim of an invidious and odious comparison. But with all respect for Buffon and Cuvier, I am inclined to think that there are other causes for the contempt which attaches to this animal. At the very outset of his career he laboured under the great disadvantage of not being "good looking." We all know how a defect of this kind affects even the destiny of man.—Hunchback and cripples, and misshapen persons are, as a rule, the special pets of society, but rather the contrary. Natural disposition, too, is a most important element in the account. By nature the donkey is humble and patient, susceptible of strong attachments, and contented with the smallest of mercies; and for this reason he is "put upon." It is the same with the human animal. When a man is patient, and humble, and contented with little, he is almost invariably the butt and the drudge of others. Every one is acquainted with some big-headed, ungainly, meek, easy-tempered human donkey who runs errands, lends money, amuses children, hangs pictures, sees old maids home, sleeps on the shake down, goes outside the omnibus in the rain to oblige a lady, and generally does every thing he is asked to do by his sharper and more selfish neighbours. This is pure good nature, but clever people who profit by it call it, in the fulness of their gratitude, stupidity. The meek and mild character always invites contumely and ill usage. If the horse commands more respect than the donkey, it is not because his character is more amiable, but because he inspires more fear. Thus the world will always have a higher opinion of the ruthless warrior who conquers with sword and flame, than of the mild apostle of peace, who goes about quietly and unobtrusively seeking to do good.—But the donkey has a physical defect—a defect which is never forgiven in either man or beast. He is little. To be meek of mind and short of stature is a terrible combination of misfortunes.—*All the Year Round.*

THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

"But if I have done these brave men one iota of injustice, let me at once recant. I qualified their aspect as of a too-late-to-bed and too-early-to-rise kind. That look—so far as the privates, at least, are concerned—is not the result of intemperance. The army of the Potomac is compulsorily, the soberest in the world. Cromwell's Ironsides drank their Nottingham and Burton ales, and occasionally took their sip of distilled waters; but the Ironsides of the American civil war

are debarred from these enjoyments. It has been found wholly incompatible with the maintenance of commonly decent discipline to permit the men to drink any kind of fermented liquors. To as much tea and coffee as they can swallow they are welcome; but they are sternly forbidden the use not only of spirits, but of the comparatively innocuous cider and lager beer. For wine they have never, at any time, cared. Their soul thirsts for whisky; but whisky, luckily for themselves in particular, and the army in general, they cannot obtain. That the illicit conveyance of spirits into the camp to some extent prevails, need scarcely be said. The soldiers do now and again contrive to procure, at exorbitant rates, some fiery poison miscalled Bourbon, Old Rye, or Monongahela; but the contraband spirit trade is rigidly looked after by the authorities, and cases of smuggling, when discovered, are rigorously punished. Any sutler detected in selling whisky to soldiers has his stock-in-trade confiscated, is compelled to 'clear out,' and may consider himself fortunate if he escapes being packed off to Washington, and incarcerated in the old Capitol. The strictest of internal custom-houses is established at Brandy Station—whose very name seems chosen in grim mockery of the forbidden luxury—and all boxes and packages containing necessaries or comforts for soldiers are scrupulously examined before they can be forwarded to the owners. Of course the soldiers grumble at this, and seize the opportunity of every mail to flood the columns of the Washington newspapers with complaints. 'It isn't our whisky being seized that riles us,' wrote one sufferer from the spirit taboo, 'but it's the seeing of it staggering about afterwards with shoulder straps on. That's what makes us mad.' And that is where, indeed, the shoe pinches. The officers seem to be able to procure as much wine, as much brandy, and as much whisky as ever they choose. They may have to smuggle it, but they do manage to smuggle it somehow. There are teetotal officers, no doubt, and there are hundreds of temperate ones; but there are, on the other hand, numbers of wearers of shoulder straps who are neither teetotal nor temperate, and these are the toppers who 'rile' the soldiers. As to allowing the latter even to purchase the very mild form of swipes known as lager beer, I was informed that it was simply impossible. So long as the demon of drink could be kept from the men, the army was all right; but once allow them so much as a dram of liquor, and violence, anarchy, rapine, confusion and ruin must be the result."—*Geo. A. Sala, Sp. Cor. to Daily Telegraph.*

MEMORY ACQUIRED BY PRACTICE.

The history of the celebrated conjurer, Robert Houdon, furnishes a remarkable example of the power of memory acquired by practice. He and his brother, while yet boys, invented a game which they played in this wise: they would pass a show window, and look in it as they passed, without stopping, and then at the next corner compare notes and see who could recollect the greater number of things in the window, including their relative positions. Having tested the accuracy of their observations, by returning to the window, they would go and repeat the experiment elsewhere. By this means they acquired incredible powers of observation and memory, so that after running by a shop window once, and glancing at it as they passed, they would enumerate every article displayed in it.