

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

BY THE EDITOR.

I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs, A palace and a prison on each hand.

SO writes the poet Byron of the gloomy arch which has been the last bridge crossed by many a hapless victim of tyranny. On the left hand side of the picture is seen the far-famed Palace of the Doges, with its stately banquet chambers and council halls. Ascending the grand stairway on which the doges were crowned, where the venerable Faliero in his eightieth year was executed, and down which rolled his gory head, and the Scala d'Oro, which only the nobles inscribed in the Golden Book were permitted to tread, we enter the great galleries filled with paintings of the triumphs of Venice, her splendour, pomp, and pride, and portraits of seventy-six doges. Here is the largest painting in the world, the "Paradise" of Tintoretto, crowded with hundreds of figures. The hall of the Senate, the Council of Ten, and of the Inquisitors of the Republic, with their historic frescoes, their antique furniture and fine caryatides supporting the marble mantels, and their memories of glory and of tyranny, all exert a strange fascination over the mind. In the splendid library I saw a copy of the first printed edition of Homer, and rare old specimens of the famous Aldine classics.

Crossing the gloomy Bridge of Sighs, I entered the still more gloomy prison of the doges, haunted with the spectres of their murdered victims.

There are two tiers of dungeons—one below the level of the canal, whose sullen waves could be heard by the prisoner lapping against the walls of his cell. The guide showed the instruments of torture,



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the hideous apparatus of murder, the channels made for the flowing blood, the secret opening by which bodies of the victims were conveyed to the canal, and the cell in which the

Doge Marino Faliero was confined. In the latter, he told me, although I doubt the story, that Byron once spent forty-eight hours, that he might gain inspiration for his gloomy tragedy upon

The King of Prussia heard of the circumstances, sent for the man the next day and made him a present for his faithfulness.

Young reader, are you as obedient

the subject. The guide took away his taper for a time, that I might realize the condition of the unhappy prisoner. The darkness was intense, and could almost be felt. A very few minutes was long enough for me.

PROMPT OBEDIENCE.

OBEDIENCE, in every case will bring happiness, while disobedience will bring punishment. Prompt obedience by children to the commands of their parents is of untold value. Often lives are saved by it. An incident illustrating this occurred a few years ago in Prussia.

On a railroad in that country, a switch-tender was once taking his place to turn a coming train, then in sight, upon a different track, in order to prevent a collision with a train coming in an opposite direction. Just then he saw his little son playing on the track of the advancing train. What he could do must be done quickly! He could not save the child and be in time to turn the switch, and for want of that many lives might be lost. He was sorely troubled, but he could not neglect his greater duty, then in a loud voice he said to his son, "Lie down." He set the switch, and the train turned safely on the right track. This child was taught to obey, and he immediately lay down and the heavy train passed over him. As soon as the train passed the switch, the father rushed to where his boy lay, fearing he might find him torn to pieces, but to his great joy he found him safe and unhurt. By instant obedience his life was saved.