

by you if you'll stand by yourself! Come along; it is written that 'he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death and prevent a multitude of sins.'

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, MARCH 10, 1894.

THE GOOD SEED.

BY REV. MARK GUY PEARSE.

"A sower went forth to sow his seed."—LUKE 8: 5; See MARK 4: 14-20.

The seed is the Word of God—the lessons you learn from the Bible; and those who teach are the sowers. But what are the fields? Well, you are the fields.

THE HARD FIELD.

"Ah," says the farmer, with a sigh, "I can do nothing with this field, the ground is so hard;" and as he strikes it with his stick, it rings as if it were a stone. "And yet you don't know what trouble I have taken with it. It is so hard that I can get nothing into it: more like a road than a field."

Ah, boys and girls, I think you know that field. In the Sunday-school, and in the house of God, and in the home, I have often seen that field. Lesson after lesson is sown, and all sorts of good seed, but nothing seems to go in. The love of God, the story of Jesus, the wickedness of sin, all seems to be lost. The heart is so dreadfully hard that no seed can get under the surface.

This is very sad. "Will it always be so hard, farmer?" you ask, wondering. And now listen to what the farmer says: "No, no; I hope not. You remember what David says in the sixty-fifth psalm—'Thou makest it soft with showers.' Only the rain from heaven can loosen the hard-baked earth, and open the ground so that the seed can get in and live. We must ask our Father in heaven to send that." So there is a cure for the hard field of our hearts. He will send upon us his Holy Spirit, then the hardness is gone. The hard field becomes the good ground, and brings forth much fruit.

Leaving this field, we pass on until we come to a gate, and stop to look at the next field. "Now," says the farmer, "this is my

WEEDY FIELD."

There is no mistake about that; weedy enough, indeed. As we come along by the hedge, our finger is stung by a tall nettle; and as we get out of the way of that, we are pricked by a sharp-leaved fellow with his gay red cap on his head—this thistle. They have no business there, and they prevent the good seed from coming up.

"You would scarcely believe how much seed I have put into this field," the farmer tells us. "And now look at it! Why, if I had never sown a grain it could scarcely have been worse."

Ah! who does not know the weedy fields? Boys and girls who have been carefully taught and anxiously looked after, and yet there came nothing but weeds. These boys, with the good seed sown in them, began to quarrel afterwards; so there came nettles and thorns, instead of good fruit. This girl has the good seed in her heart, but she begins to think unkind thoughts, and perhaps to say spiteful things; so comes a prickly thistle instead of good seed.

And these flowers—they were weeds because they were in the wrong place. Very good in a garden, but here, where they choked much good seed, they were very bad. Laughing is a good thing, but laughing in the wrong place is a weed. Talking is a good thing, and nothing is more foolish than to think that children should be seen and not heard.

Passing from that field, the farmer says in a low whisper, "Now if you go quietly, and cross this lane, and up the bank to the next gate, you will see a strange sight. This is

THE BIRD FIELD."

Directly our heads appear, up fly all sorts of birds. There are swift wood-pigeons, that go flying into the distance; there are lazy rooks, wheeling into the air, and flapping out of danger with a "caw," "caw," as much as to say, "We are not caught yet." How many boys and girls there are in whom all the good seed is eaten up by the fowls of the air; and who does not know the names of many of these birds?

A busy, bold little bird that steals much good seed on all sides, is called "inattention." Then there is the "chattering magpie," a great thief; busy whispering here and there, and humming and buzzing; a very destructive bird is this.

One day as I was going through the fields I meet a little sharp-eyed fellow standing by the stile as if he were very glad to see anybody in that lonely place. In his hands he held two pieces of stick that he kept knocking together with a loud noise. "Click-clack, click-clack," went the little fellow. "What are you doing, my boy?" I asked. He was making such a noise that he could not hear what I said. He stopped, and then I asked him again what he was doing that for. "Why, I'm scaring the birds, sir," he cried out. And as a rook settled at the end of the field he ran away after it with a click-clack, click-clack, that soon sent it flying. That is what we must all do. We must all scare away birds that eat the good seed.

Now we have come to the last field. "Here," says the farmer, "is my bit of

GOOD GROUND."

We wonder that it is so different from the rest. But the farmer tells us how the rain from heaven softened it, and how they cleared the weeds and sowed the seed, and scared the birds; and here now is this rich harvest. The seed fell into good ground, and brought forth much fruit.

And now, dear children, thank God that we can all be good ground. God can take away the stone out of our hearts, and by his Holy Spirit he can create within us the good ground. Let us kneel down and ask our heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, to make us good ground. "The good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

"Create in me a clean heart, O God!"

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.

"How much further is it, Gertrude?"

"One mile, dearest. Are you tired?"

"Very," answered the beautiful child, with a sigh which sounded almost like a sob to the sister's ears,—so faint it was, and yet so sad! It told not only of tired feet, but of a tired heart and a weary soul as well.

For she was a drunkard's child, and this knowledge stung the motherless girl in all its bitterness. She was no stranger to want and suffering. Harsh words and cruel blows she had long been accustomed to; and the saddest part was that they came from him who of all the world should have loved her most. At last illness had fallen upon her and life seemed very hard to bear.

"It grieves me," murmured the child in the same sad strain, "that you must work so hard to buy medicine for me."

"Don't you wish," she continued after a pause, "that papa had never tasted the cruel poison which sets his brains on fire and causes him to beat us so?"

"God knows I do, sweet Evelyn," answered the sister fervently, tenderly kissing the trembling lips. "But I shall take care of you, dear," she added reassuringly, clasping the slender hand still closer within her own, and leading her gently onward. Tenderly she lifted her over the steep and stony places, telling her sweet stories and singing pretty songs to while the time away. Very strong and devoted was the love between the sisters.

At last the market-place was reached, and the produce disposed of. Eagerly Gertrude deposited the few shillings in her purse and hastened to the doctor's office. The doctor shook his head and looked very grave, remarking that the child's cough was worse. Two great tears rolled down Gertrude's cheeks. Mechanically placing the medicine within her basket, she took Evelyn's hand, and left the office with a heavy heart. That was the last time the sisters should ever walk together on earth.

Three weeks later there was a weeping in the drunkard's home. Evelyn was dying; and never before had she appeared so beautiful and fair. By the bedside knelt Gertrude in unutterable anguish, feeling that the only joy of her life was going out. Long she wrestled with the great sorrow which stood in its giant strength, waiting to crush her to the earth. A faint voice roused her.

"Gertrude."

"What is it, darling?"

"Please tell me that beautiful story again. I must hear it once more before I die!"

She stretched forth her little hand in an entreating manner toward the sister. Gertrude clasped it within her own, and, as she had so often done before, told her the story of the cross,—the sweet story which Evelyn loved so well. The large blue eyes grew bright even in death, as she listened, and when Gertrude had finished, she pointed heavenward, and with one imploring look toward her father, whispered: "Behold the Lamb of God." One faint struggle, and her eyes closed forever, until she should open them in that blessed home where all tears are wiped away.

"Earth to earth," was spoken above the little grave; still the drunkard lingered. And when all were gone, he knelt in the solemn hush of the churchyard and sobbed: "Oh Evelyn! in thy death have I received eternal and everlasting life. How great and wonderful are the mercies of God's Providence!"

He arose from the ground,—no longer the drunkard, for he had indeed beheld "The Lamb of God."—*Young Disciple.*

"THE NILLENNIUM."

"See here," said Dilly to Freddie Burr, as she pushed the toes of a pair of stout new shoes through the fence.

"Where did you get 'em?" asked Freddie.

"And see here!" continued Dilly, bobbing up for an instant to show the pretty hood that covered her yellow hair, and touched it significantly with her finger.

"Where did you get 'em?" repeated Freddie.

"My pa worked and bought 'em and brought 'em home; an' they didn't get into nobody's barrel, either," explained Dilly with great pride and little regard for grammar, pressing her face close against the fence for a prolonged interview.

"You see, Freddie Burr," began Dilly, "the Nillennium has come to our house."

"The Nillennium!"

"It's a pretty long word," explained Dilly, complacently, "but it means good times. Anyhow, that's what ma called it, and I guess she knows. It was just this way, Freddie Burr. When you told me Mr. Barney had all our good things down to his store in his rum barrels, I just went down there right off and asked for 'em—me and Toddles."

"You didn't!" exclaimed horrified Freddie.

"Did too!" declared Dilly, with an em-

phatic nod. "Well, he wouldn't give us one of them, and he was just as cross as anything. So then pa got up from behind the stove and walked home with us. He didn't scold a bit, but he just sat down before the fire this way, and thanked and thanked. At last he put his hands in one pocket, but there was nothing there; then he put it in his other pocket and found ten cents, and he went out and bought some meat for supper. When ma got home he talked to her and they both cried: I didn't know what for, 'less it was because we didn't get the things out of the barrel. And ma begged me 'most to death that night and kissed me lots, she did. Well, my pa got some work the next day, and brought some money, and he said his little boy and girl shall have things like other boys and girls. So now you know what the Nillennium means, Freddie, when anybody asks you; and you can tell that Dilly Keene splaned it to you."

You'll Have to Avoid the Saloon.

You stand on the threshold of youth, boys,
Your future lies out in the years;
You're learning your parts for life's work,
boys;
You're planning your future careers.
You'll have to fill places of trust, boys;
Your fathers will pass away soon;
And if you'd be trustworthy men, boys,
You'll have to avoid the saloon.

If you would be honoured in life, boys,
If joy and contentment you'd know;
If you would have plenty of cash, boys,
And bask in prosperity's glow;
If you would enjoy robust health, boys,
That priceless but much abused boon;
If God's benediction you'd have, boys,
You'll have to avoid the saloon.

You'll have to avoid the saloon, boys,
Or sorrow and shame you will share,
And poverty's crust you will eat, boys,
And poverty's rags you will wear.
Your future will end in disgrace, boys,
Your life be cut off at its noon;
Both body and soul will be lost, boys,
Unless you avoid the saloon.

—Our Companion.

STORY OF A HANDKERCHIEF.

ON the occasion of Mr. John B. Gough's funeral at Hillside, a little handkerchief was placed over the back of his chair, the latter being placed at the head of his coffin. The story of that handkerchief was told by Mr. Gough in an address on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the National Temperance Society in May, 1870. We find it in the *Gough Memorial Pamphlet* just issued by the society. Mr. Gough said:

"I have in my home a small handkerchief not worth three cents to you, but you could not buy it from me. A woman brought it and said to my wife, 'I am very poor, I would give him a thousand pounds if I had them, but I brought this.' I married with the fairest prospects before me; but my husband took to drinking and everything went. The pianoforte my mother gave me and everything else was sold, until at last I found myself in a miserable room. My husband lay drunk in a corner: my child that was lying across my knee was restless; I sang, 'The Light of Other Days is Faded,' and wet my handkerchief with tears. My husband, said she, 'make yours. He spoke a few words and gave a grasp of the hand, and now for six years my husband has been to me all that a husband can be to a wife, and we are getting our household goods together again. I have brought your husband the very handkerchief I wet through that night with tears, and I want him to remember when he is speaking that he has wiped away those tears from me, I trust God, forever. These are the trophies that make men glad."

"I AM afraid, Bobby," said his mother, "that when I tell your papa what a naughty boy you've been to-day he will punish you." "Have you got to tell him?" asked Bobby anxiously. "Oh, yes; I shall tell him immediately after dinner." The look of concern upon Bobby's face deepened, until a bright thought struck him. "Well, ma," he said, "give him a better dinner than usual. I might do that much for me."