

PRIZE ESSAY.

Idleness.

BY A. BERYL COULTER, PINE VIEW, ISLINGTON, ONT.

"The busy world shoves angrily aside
The man who stands with arms akimbo set.
Until occasion tells him what to do:
And he who waits to have his task marked out
Shall die and leave his errand unfulfilled."

Many moralists have remarked, that of all human vices pride has the wisest dominion, appears in the greatest multiplicity of forms, and lies hid under the greatest variety of disguises—of which disguises, like the morn's veils of brightness, are both its lustre and its shade, and betray it to others though they hide it from themselves.

It is not my intention to degrade pride from its pre-eminence, yet I know not whether idleness may not maintain a very doubtful and obstinate position. Idleness predominates in many lives where it is not expected, for, unlike many other vices, it does not arouse suspicion, being a silent and peaceful quality that neither excites envy by ostentation or hatred by opposition.

Some there are who profess idleness in its full dignity, who glory in saying they do nothing, and thank their stars that they have nothing to do; who sleep every night till they can sleep no longer, and rise only that exercise may enable them to sleep again; who prolong the reign of darkness by double curtains, and who wake to tell the messenger of the morning how they hate his beams; whose days differ only from their night but as a couch or chair differs from a bed. These are the true and open votaries of idleness, who exist in the state of unruffled, stupefied laziness, and at whose death the survivors can only say they have ceased to breathe.

Such a person is a nuisance and an annoyance to the active business man, and often makes him feel unhappy that such creatures exist to counteract the influence of honest labor. Whether he possesses an income to support his laziness or sponges on his good-natured friends, he is equally despised. He is the prolific author of want and shame, and no good is ever expected from him; he is a confused workshop for Satan to tinker in. In short, he is a nuisance in the world, and needs abatement for the public good.

Idleness is the bane of body and mind, the nurse of naughtiness, and the chief author of all mischief, one of the seven deadly sins, the cushion upon which the devil reposes, and a great cause, not only of melancholy, but of many other diseases, for the mind is naturally active, and if it is not occupied about some honest business it rushes into mischief or sinks into melancholy. Of all contemptible things there is nothing half so wretched as the *lazy man*. The Turks say, "The devil tempts everybody, but the idle man tempts the devil." When we notice that a man can be a professional loafer, or a successful idler, with less capital, less brains than is required to succeed in any other profession, we cannot blame them so much after all, for these are the things that the idler is generally destitute of, and we notice it is an actual fact that they succeed in their business, and it costs them no brains, no character, no energy, no nothing. They are dead-beats; they should not be classed among the living, they are a sort of dead men that cannot be buried.

We have those among us who would rather go hungry and in rags than to work. We also have a numerous train of gentleman idlers who pass down the stream of life at the expense of their fellow passengers. They live well and dress well as long as possible by borrowing and sponging, then take to gambling, swindling, stealing, robbing, and often pass on for years before justice overtakes them. So long as these persons can

keep up fashionable appearances and elude the police, they are received in the company of the upper ten. Many an idle knave, by means of a fine coat, a lily hand and a grateful bow, has been received with the polite circle of society with eclat, and walked rough-shod over a worthy young mechanic or farmer, who had too much good sense to make a dash or imitate the monkey-shines of an itinerant dandy. A fine dress, in the eyes of some, covers more sins than charity.

Young man, if you do not wish to graduate a nobody, or somebody worse than a nobody, then guard your youth. A lazy youth will make a lazy man, just as sure as a crooked sapling makes a crooked tree. Whoever saw a youth grow up in idleness that did not make a lazy, shiftless vagabond, when he comes to be a man, though he was not a man by character? The great mass of thieves, paupers and criminals have come to what they are by being brought up to do nothing useful. Laziness grows on people; it begins in cob-web, and ends in iron chains. That man who waits for an opportunity to do much at once, may breathe out his life in idle wishes, and finally, when too late, regret his useless intentions and barren zeal—a young man idle, an old man needy. Idleness travels very leisurely along, and poverty soon overtakes it. To be idle is to be poor.

It is said that riches and poverty are inconsistent companions, but when idleness unites them, the depth of wretchedness is complete. Leisure is sweet to those who have earned it, but burdensome to those who get it for nothing.

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb, driven creatures—
Be a hero in the strife."

The Automatic Knife.

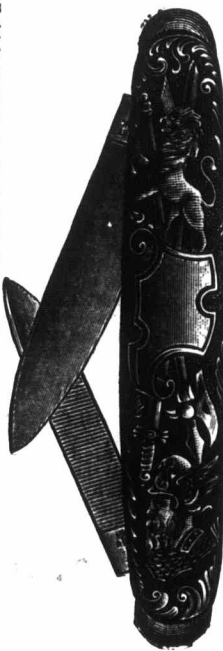
We are always on the lookout for something useful and novel for our subscribers, and now give the boys and girls an opportunity of getting an excellent knife for very little effort. The blades are all warranted hand-forged of the very finest Sheffield silver steel. The handle is beautifully chased and nickel-plated. The opening device is curious and unique. It is done by pushing a button at the end of the handle, and the blade springs up as shown in the cut. These knives sell for \$1.00 each. We will give one to any of our subscribers who send us \$2.00 and the names of two new subscribers.

In forwarding your order with names and remittances, state if you wish both blades smooth or one smooth and the other with nail-cleaner.

Our Premiums.

On account of being overcrowded for space, we were obliged to leave out our vegetable and flower seed premiums. We refer you to same on pages 28 and 29, January number.

For nine new subscribers and nine dollars we will give you one of Lenox sprayers, see illustration and advertisement of same on page 77. We also call your attention to our knife premiums shown above; every boy and girl should have one of these handsome and excellent knives. Secure the new subscribers at once, so that all parties will get our handsome January number. We are pleased to say our circulation is increasing very rapidly.



Uncle Tom's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES AND NEPHEWS:—

Have you ever noticed how loud and coarse your music seemed after hearing a well-trained musician perform? How feelingly the chords harmonized, and how your inmost soul was stirred as familiar air of song or hymn or psalm was sung? What new beauties you find in them now! Although you heard them so often before, you failed to find their beauty. You may have felt a similar feeling when listening to a good reader, when the one reading had studied the selection so well as to understand what the author meant; then had read and read it again, until inflection, pronunciation, emphasis, accentuation and punctuation had brought out the best of what was in it. We are told that Charles Dickens would not read to others his own composition without practicing it for six weeks. Yet some of nieces and nephews will read and think they fully understand such extracts as "The Death of Little Nell," or "The Child's Dream of a Star," by simply reading it over. Your teachers are urging you, you say, to commit poetry to memory, and, as an exercise for the memory, strengthening it, making it reliable, quick, tenacious, it cannot be excelled. Beautiful thoughts clothed in beautiful language are in that way fastened on the memory as nails hold pictures on the wall. What society boys and girls are admitted into who love good reading! Their thoughts are ennobled, their language improved, and new interests awakened, calling out their better feelings.

During the holiday season two or three books have probably been added to each of your homes. What they are will affect you for all time to come. Happy the home, happy the niece or nephew who has found a treasure, which, like an opening gate, will admit him or her to "the primrose path of literature" to gather fresh flowers, and with taste to choose only the beautiful ones as the years go by. For as in music, so in reading, having once tasted the honey and the wine, we do not care to go back to the strong meats and gravies, or, I might better say, to husks and poisons, for many books have less mind-sustaining power than husks to the body, and some there are that do poison and kill the life of the mind and the soul. You have heard of the upas tree that was said to poison the atmosphere around it; well, some books do just that, they kill or at least stunt and often defile the mind—that mind God gave you to develop.

Of books which do not grow old, which have the same interest for you as they had for your father and grandfather, have you noticed that the authors were familiar with the Bible?

"Woe worth the chase! Woe worth the day!
That cost thy life, my gallant gray."

Scott says in "The Lady of the Lake," and we find his expression in the prophetic words of old, "Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Tennyson, the present poet laureate, says:—
"And in Job we find the old words, and in the new they are but reset."

In prose, too, the best writers of the day are those who have in younger days studied their Bible and nature, and now, in mature years, when conflicting opinions are being stirred, they stand firm having a foundation for their feet on which they may stand firm and secure.

Other books grow old as times and customs change, but this one Book has stood through all the centuries copied from, a target for shots of all kinds, admired, hated, despised, yet the one unchanging Book in which life lessons are ever learned.

UNCLE TOM.