

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XVIII.]

TORONTO, JANUARY 1, 1898.

[No 1.

The New Year.

BY LAURA E. RICHARDS.

"Now, what is that noise?"
said the glad New Year,
"Now, what is that singular
sound I hear?
As if all the paper in all the
world
Were rattled and shaken and
twisted and twirled."
"Oh! that," said the jolly
old Earth, "is the noise
Of all my children, both girls
and boys,
A-turning over their leaves so
aw,
And all to do honour, New
Year, to you."

WHAT THE LEAVES SAID.

I won't take Alice's sticks of
candy;
I won't call Robert a jack-a-
dandy;
I won't squeak my pencil on
my slate;
I won't lie in bed every day
and be late;
I won't make faces at Timothy
Mark;
I won't make fun behind any-
one's back.
Rustle and turn them, so
and so!
The good shall come and the bad shall
go.

I won't tear "barn doors" in all my
frocks;
I won't put my toes through all my socks.
I won't be greedy at dinner table!
At least—I think I won't—if I'm able!
I will not pinch, nor poke, nor tease;
I will not rutter, nor cough, nor sneeze.
I will not grumble, nor fret, nor scold,
And I will do exactly whatever I'm told.
Rustle and turn them, so and so!
The good shall come and the bad shall
go.

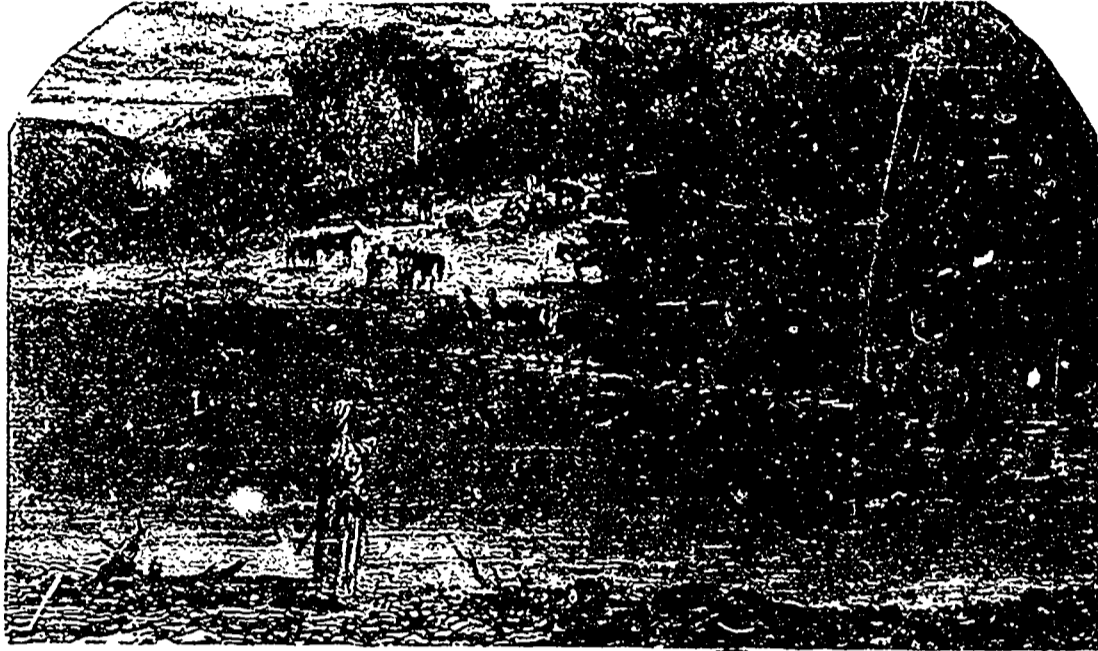
THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

BY THE EDITOR.

Every year many thousands of Russian pilgrims visit the river Jordan that they may bathe in its sacred waters at the spot where it is supposed that our Lord was baptized.

The road all the way from Jerusalem is thronged with Russian pilgrims of the Greek Church on their way to the Jordan. They are a very picturesque, but shabby and dishevelled-looking crowd, in all degrees of raggedness. Most of them trudge along, sweltering beneath sheep-skin cloaks, like Bryan O'Flynn's, "with the woolly side in." They wear long, unkempt, square-cut hair and shaggy beards, and carry bamboo staves from the Jordan, or palm branches, in their hands.

The women are generally mounted on the backs of much-enduring donkeys,



FORD OF THE JORDAN.
Traditional Scene of the Baptism of Jesus.

crouched on their bedding with, it may be, one or two children. They often wear a fur-lined cloak and top boots, and ride with short stirrups, bringing their knees almost to their chin. In the sweltering heat they ineffectually try to ward off the sun's rays by a palm branch or the corner of a shawl stretched out on a bamboo cane. The village priest trudges along with his parishioners, dressed in black gown and tall black hat, whose rim is at the top instead of at the bottom. Some of these footworn and weary pilgrims carry heavy bags on their shoulders. They all wear sad and weary faces, and ceremoniously salute the howadgi with humble obeisance.

THIS PILGRIMAGE

is the event of a lifetime. The rustic inhabitants of some village in the remote Caucasus or Greek Islands, save their money for years and, with the village priest, make the pilgrimage to the sacred places, carrying with them the long, white shroud in which they bathe in the Jordan, and which they carry to their distant homes to be their final winding-sheet.

While the Russian pilgrims are said to number nine-tenths of the whole, yet there are many others, Cypriotes, Levantines, Abyssinians, Comos, Syrians, Armenians—adherents of the ancient Christian sects of the East. We saw at the Jordan a tall, handsome Abyssinian woman, weary and wayworn, who had got separated from her companions and was anxiously inquiring the way to the convent. It made us think of Mary return-

Jordan. We passed a couple of ruined monasteries, in a grotto beneath one of which John the Baptist is said to have dwelt; and another, with dilapidated vaults and ruined arcades, still bears the name, "Castle of the Jews." We were soon riding through the dense thickets or willows and caues which bordered the sacred stream. Its swift, turbid flow rushed past, steadily wasting away the steep clay banks which rise like cliffs. Its many windings greatly increase its length, as shown by the map on third page. The distance from its source to its mouth, in a straight line, is about 136 miles. From Tiberias to the Dead Sea is only about 64 miles, but the windings of the river make the distance nearly 200 miles. From its rapid fall it derives its name, "the Descender," its mouth being 3,000 feet below its source. It is exceedingly turbid, and we understood better after seeing it the contempt of Naaman for its muddy stream.

THE JORDAN VALLEY

at Jericho is about eight miles wide. Within this valley is a narrower one, less than a mile in width, and depressed about fifty feet below the level of the plain, with a dense thicket bordering the stream, once infested with lions (Jer. 49, 19). It has generally been crossed by fording, although David and Barzillai were conveyed across in a ferry boat (2 Sam. 19, 18-31). The legend of St Christopher and the child Jesus is at-

tached to the Jordan. The large cut on this page shows the traditional site where it is believed that our Lord was baptized.

For many centuries pilgrims have come by the thousands to the sacred stream for bathing and baptism. Royal baptisms in Europe have generally been in Jordan water. Each of us brought home some of it boiled down and sealed in glass vessels bearing Russian religious rollins. My friend, Mr. Read, I hear, has baptized half a hundred babies with his quantum. We sat by the river and sang, "On Jordan's stormy bank I stand," "Jesus, lover of my soul," and Mr. Read recited "On Nebo's Lonely Mountain." While Judge Carman, that persistent "Canaanite," went into the thicket with his jack-knife looking for souvenirs, I slowly walked with Madame along the dry and solid-seaming surface of the bank, but soon found myself sinking to my ankles in the soft mud.

At the base of the hill of Jericho is the "Fountain of Elisha," by which Jericho was formerly supplied with water. It flows into an ancient basin of hewn stone, still in pretty good repair, thirteen yards long by eleven wide, from which ran a well-built aqueduct. The temperature of the water is 84 degrees Fahr. This, it is claimed, is the water which Elisha healed with salt, and where he made the ax-head to swim (2 Kings 2, 19-23).

THE FATHER'S INVITATION.

Calling to see a gentleman at his office, I was surprised to find his little ten-year-old girl.

"Why, Nellie," I said, "I thought you were in the country, at school."

"Yes," said Nellie, "but I came up this morning."

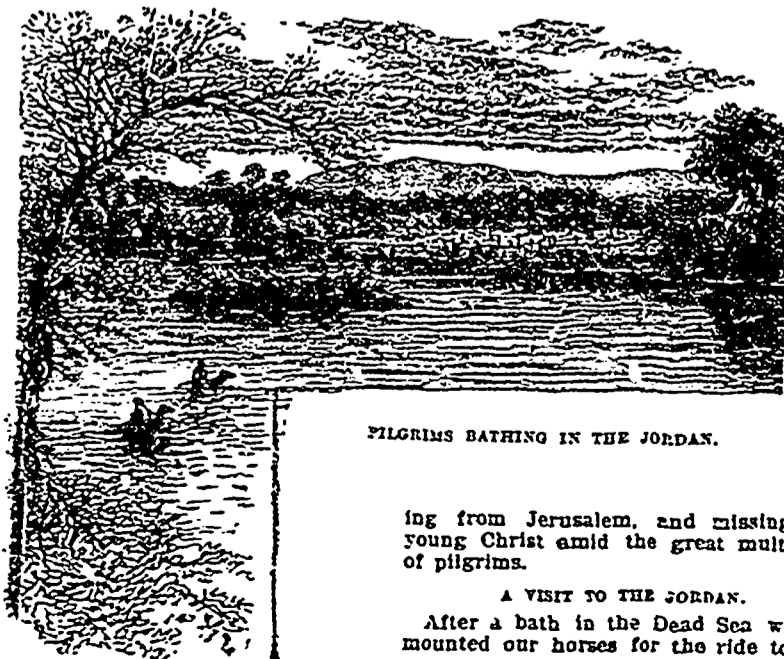
"Did you come so far by yourself? How did you find your way? Weren't you afraid?"

"Oh!" she said, "papa met me at the station."

"But what would you have done if he hadn't met you?"

"Oh! I knew he was sure to come, for he wrote to me and said, 'Come by the nine o'clock train and you will find me waiting for you on the platform.'"

So Nellie was not afraid to come in the train by herself, for she trusted her father when he said as plainly as could be, "Come, and you will find me." Our heavenly Father says the same thing to us in the Bible.—The Morning Star.



PILGRIMS BATHING IN THE JORDAN.

ing from Jerusalem, and missing the young Christ amid the great multitude of pilgrims.

A VISIT TO THE JORDAN.

After a bath in the Dead Sea we remounted our horses for the ride to the



THE JERICHO ROAD.

The Valley of the Jordan in the distance.