

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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## Do What You Can.

"We cannot all be heroes,  
And thrill a hemisphere  
With some great daring venture,  
Some deed that mocks at fear;  
But we can fill a lifetime  
With kindly acts and true;  
There's always noble service  
For noble hearts to do.

"We cannot all be preachers,  
And sway with voice and pen,  
As strong winds sway the forest,  
The minds and hearts of men;  
But we can be evangelists  
To souls within our reach;  
There's always Love's own gospel  
For living hearts to preach.

"We cannot all be martyrs,  
And win a deathless name  
By some Divine baptism,  
Some ministry of flame;  
But we can live for truth's sake,  
Can do for Christ and dare;  
There's always faithful witness  
For faithful hearts to bear."

## THE SNOW PLOUGH.

BY THE EDITOR.

One of the largest and most interesting exhibits at Chicago was that representing the development of the railway locomotive. There were "Puffing Billy" and the "Rocket," two of the earliest English locomotives, and the queer little engines with a wood-rack and a barrel of water for tender drawing after them two or three stage coaches on railway trucks. At the other end of the gamut was the splendid new engine, No. 999, which had drawn a train from New York to Chicago, part of the way at the rate of one hundred and twelve miles and a half per hour, a bright polished, seemingly sentient-looking thing with driving-wheels over seven feet high.

The Pullman and other vestibule trains were like a hotel on wheels. The parlour and dining-room cars were fitted up in most elaborate luxury. There were also library, writing-room, bath-room, and barber shop, lighted and heated by electricity, with the most complete arrangements for comfort and luxury that can be imagined.

I saw also locomotives with a couple of erect cylinders on either side, the pistons of which actuated cogged gear-wheels which turned the drivers, enabling a comparatively light and small engine to haul a heavy load at the rate of twenty miles an hour up a steep mountain grade.

I also saw a couple of tremendous snow-ploughs, one like that in our picture, the other with great rotary screws that bored into the snow-drifts and tossed the snow a hundred feet away from the track.

One of the greatest enemies railways have to contend with is the snow blizzard. A few years ago, every road in the country as far south as Washington was greatly impeded, and some trains were stopped for days; traffic was almost entirely interrupted, and New York and other great cities were in a state of siege.

Near Toronto, at another time, a train was stalled three days in the snow within five miles of the city. Nor is this difficulty confined to Canada. In Central Europe, especially among the mountain railways, similar obstruction occurs, and even in the North of England trains have been so buried in the snow that only the funnel of the engine was visible.

The snow-plough, however, so largely used in Canada, will force its way through almost any obstruction, especially when backed up by half a dozen engines, as shown in our cut. In making a winter journey through New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to catch the mail steamer at Halifax, our train repeatedly ran into snow-drifts at night. I could feel the dull thud as the solid drifts stopped the train and then the engine backed a bit and went at it again and forced its way through all obstructions. These difficulties entail heavy expense on railways, especially when the telegraph service becomes demoralized through the breaking of the wires.

There is something titanic in the conflict between the ingenuity of man and the brute forces of nature. Half a dozen engine-drivers and as many firemen, with a few pounds of coal and pails of water to engender steam, a few iron and steel wheels and cylinders, will attack with the accumulated force of a thousand

## CHARLIE'S BLIND BIRD.

When Charlie Manning was about three years old, his grandmother sent him a canary. It was only a few months old, but it had already begun to sing, and was one of the prettiest little birds you ever saw. When Charlie watched it jump from the tiny little cage in which it had travelled from St. Leonard's to London, he was quite silent for a few minutes, then he jumped up and called out: "Nurse, nurse, come quick! Dickie's got a cap like you."

The fact was that the canary had what is called a crest on his head, which made him look different from any other canary that the little boy had seen.

Charlie's mother wanted him to learn to think for others instead of himself, so she went into the nursery every morning before breakfast to give Dickie clean sand and fresh seed and water. Of course Charlie wanted to help, and she always let him do it, though I am afraid that at first he put more sand on the floor than in the cage. As to the water, he spilled half that too; but as the nursery had floor cloth instead of carpet, he could easily wipe that up. So Charlie grew to be very fond of his canary, and never forgot to feed it and give it a bath.

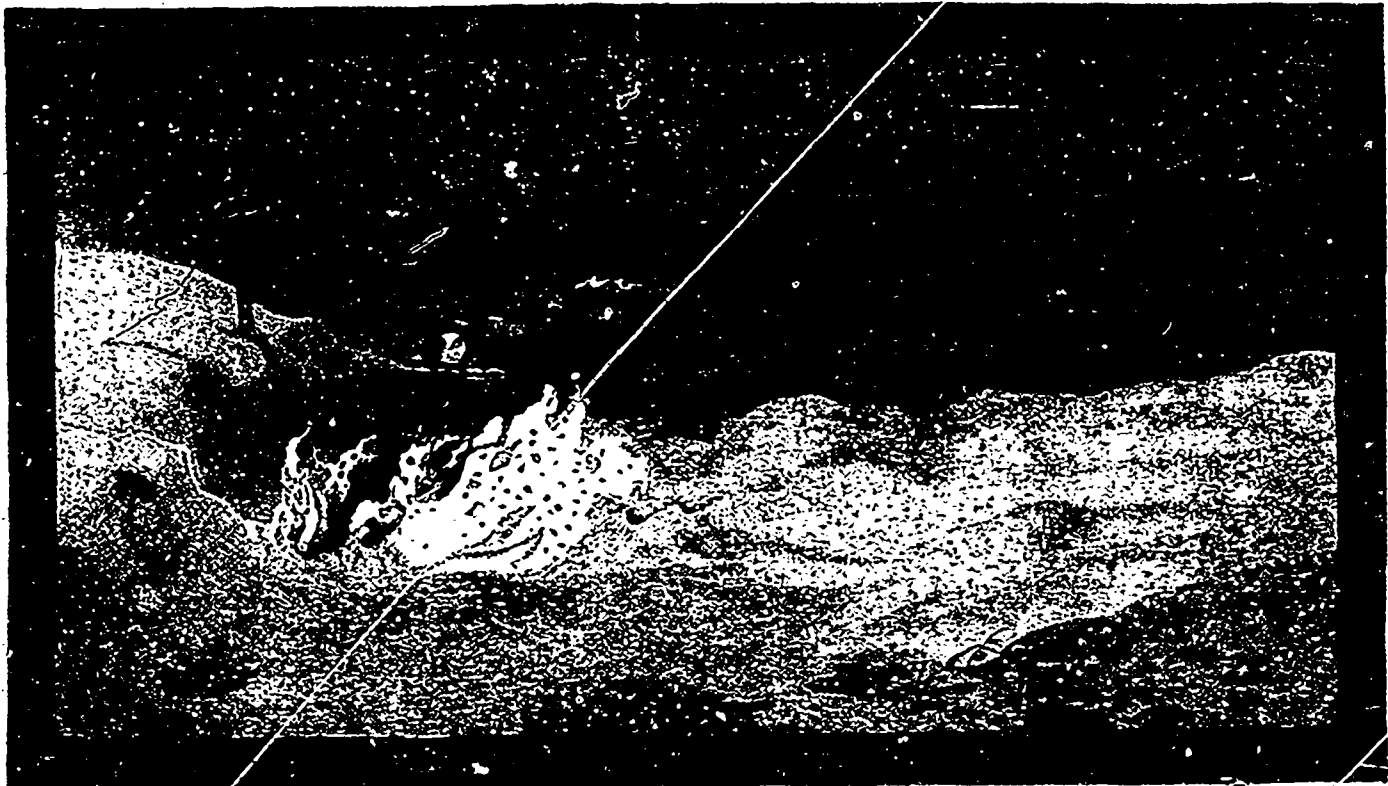
One day, about a year after the bird arrived, Charlie went to his mother in

There is one thing more I should like to tell you, and that is how Charlie's little blind Dickie did good to his master. Charlie is getting to be a big boy now, and goes to school every day. He was very miserable at first. But one day when he had been studying hard in the garden, and grumbling a good deal, he heard Dickie singing. He took his book to the window sill, and, looking up at the canary, he said: "Yes, you have learned how to make the best of a bad job. So will I. I won't grumble any more, but just do my work as well as I can and as fast as I can."

## WHY BIRDS GO TO THE ARCTIC REGIONS.

The number of birds that go to the Arctic regions to breed is "vast beyond conception." They go, not by thousands, but by millions, to rear their young on the tundra. The cause which attracts them is because nowhere in the world does nature provide at the same time and in the same place "such a lavish prodigality of food." That the barren swamp of the tundra should yield a food-supply so great as to tempt birds to make journeys of thousands of miles to rear their young in a land of plenty only to be found beyond the Arctic

Circle, seems incredible. The vegetation largely consists of cranberry, cloud-berry, and crow-berry bushes. Forced by the perpetual sunshine of the Arctic summer, these bear enormous crops of fruit. But the crop is not ripe until the middle and end of the Arctic summer, and if the fruit-eating birds had to wait until it was ripe they would starve, for they arrive on the very day of the melting of the snow. But each year the snow descends on this immense crop of ripe food before the birds have had time to gather it. It is then preserved beneath the snow, perfectly fresh and pure, and the melting of the snow discloses the bushes with



THE SNOW PLOUGH.

horses, a solid snow embankment and make everything go before them.

These tremendous drifts are an illustration of the accumulative force of many littles. A snowflake is the lightest, most fragile, downiest thing in the world. Under the microscope it reveals the loveliest formation of star crystals. Little by little they sift down, seeming soft as carded wool. But trampled by the feet of the storm they become almost as hard as adamant.

So the tiny grains of sand, so small and light that they can hardly be weighed by the chemist's scales, will drift across the Southern railways and present a still worse obstacle than the snow in the north. Washed up by the waves they make great banks at sea on which many a good ship has been pounded to pieces.

So, too, the little things of life, the snow-flakes and sand grains of habit, will build up an almost impassable barrier to intellectual and spiritual progress. "Obsta principiis," says the Latin proverb—"Resist the beginnings." We need to guard well the seemingly trivial things of life lest they forge fetters for the soul which only the power of Omnipotence can break.

great distress. "Mother," he said, "I believe that Dickie is ill, and, do you know, he has something the matter with his eye."

Mrs. Manning went upstairs directly, and found the poor bird looking very sadly indeed; but, what was worse still, she saw that one eye was gone. Charlie and his mother went off at once for the bird doctor, but when he looked at the poor canary he said that he could do no good. The bird must have injured his eye with one of the little wire hooks in the cage. But it was sadder still to hear that he was afraid the sight of the other eye would go too. And so it did, before two months were over, and the little canary was very sad and miserable at first, and seemed afraid to move from one little spot on one particular perch. Then Charlie was more tender and careful than ever not to frighten his poor bird, and his own eyes filled with tears as he looked at his little blind pet.

But by-and-bye the canary got over his sorrow, and began singing more beautifully than ever. Then he had courage to take a few hops about the cage; and now, if you went into the nursery you would never believe that it was a blind bird which was hanging in the window.

the unconsumed last year's crop hanging on them, or lying, ready to be eaten, on the ground. The frozen meal stretches across the breadth of Asia. It never decays, and is accessible the moment the snow melts. Ages have taught the birds that they have only to fly to the Arctic Circle to find such a store of "crystallized foods" as will last them till the bushes are once more forced into bearing by the perpetual sunlight. The same heats which free the fruits bring into being the most prolific insect life in the world; the mosquito swarms on the tundra. No European can live there without a veil after the snow melts; the gun-barrels are black with them, and the cloud often obscures the sight. Thus the insect-eating birds have only to open their mouths to fill them with mosquitoes, and the presence of swarms of tender little warblers, of cliff chaffs, pipits, and wagtails, in this Arctic region is accounted for.

An old lady in Texas says she never could imagine where all the Smiths came from until she saw in a town a large sign, "Smith Manufacturing Company."