

August. In London, school opens at 9 o'clock, adjourns for lunch at noon, and holds another session in the afternoon from 2 until 4.30 o'clock. And woe to the English boy who plays truant. If, after a certain number of warnings, he fails to make a satisfactory record by attendance at school, he is arrested by an officer and brought before a magistrate, who sentences him to imprisonment in the "truant school." The average length of his confinement is ninety-five days.—School Journal.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, JANUARY 23, 1897.

TRYING TO BE A CHRISTIAN.

Josie was spending the summer at her grandfather's. During the previous winter a number of her schoolmates had united with the church. Her grandfather, knowing how much interested she had been at that time, asked her one day if she had given her heart to Christ.

When she replied, "I am trying to be a Christian," she was quite surprised and a little hurt to hear him exclaim:

"Trying to be a Christian? Why do you try? Christ has done all that is necessary: there is nothing left for you to do but to trust him."

The more Josie thought of his words the more clear his meaning became to her. She had supposed that Christians never did wroag, and that until she learned to do just right, always, she could not be a Christian. She found that she had been trying, by her own good deeds, to earn salvation, instead of accepting it as a free gift.

So Josie gave up trying to make herself a Christian, and asked Jesus to forgive her sins, and take her as his own child; and then she tried harder than ever to do right because she belonged to Christ and loved him.

FIDDLER CRABS.

Would some of you like to hear on an afternoon stroll we took at low-tide one day along the Cape Cod beach? Mamma and auntie and I set out hoping to pick up scallop-shells on the sand. We did find some beauties, of all sizes and sorts, and since then have sent them off in a box by express to Boston, to the sick children in a hospital, feeling sure they would like to amuse themselves with these pretty shells that came from the Cape Cod shores.

The oddest thing we saw that afternoon on our walk along the beach was a multitude of round holes in the wet sand, as big as though the point of a man's cane had made them. These holes were as close together as the fingers of your hand, when spread out. Can you guess what made them? We watched, and soon we saw dozens of little brown fiddler-crabs scuttling sideways over the beach, and the moment we came near them they would run for the nearest hole and disappear. So this was what the holes meant. At high-tide, when the beach is covered by the waves, these "fiddlers" go down their holes and stay till the next low tide. They make fresh holes to come out by, casting up little round balls of wet sand as they come, so that all around the holes you see little

heaps of sand thrown up by these busy workers.

You would be amused to examine closely a fiddler-crab. When a crab walks, its head is always at the side, not in front, which looks queer enough. The father crabs have one big white claw at one side of the body, and with this they defend themselves if attacked, and they also catch their food by means of it. If they see you coming near, they raise this claw and open its jaws like a pair of shears. I caught one of them, picking it up quickly from the sand, and when we gave him a chance he would nip our fingers; but it did not hurt much, and when we dropped him off he scuttled into one of the sand-holes. There were miles of baby-fiddlers, and mother-ones too, without the long white claw. The beach was covered with the curious tracks left by them as they wandered over it at low-tide, looking for their food.

When we had finished our stroll we came home, thinking how many strange and wonderful things God our Father has made, and how he has taken care to give to each creature just what it needs.

SOME CURIOSITIES OF NATURAL HISTORY.

One of the most notable characteristics of all life, vegetable and animal, is the faculty that apparently almost every species has of protecting itself from its various enemies and the dangers which threaten it on account of its own delicate and complicated organism. By way of illustration, two instances may be cited. The Venus fly-trap, an insect-eating plant, is most exquisitely sensitive to a momentary touch, and the hapless insect that brushes against a filament of its steel-trap-like leaves is instantly ensnared and slowly devoured. Yet these leaves are altogether indifferent to rain and wind, and if accidentally closed by a bit of sand or other inorganic matter soon reopen with but slight inconvenience. A species of grouse, commonly known as a cock of the plains, is feathered in colours so like the lichens, stalks of wild sage, dried leaves, bunch-grass and dead twigs scattered over the sandy wastes that it inhabits, that it is almost impossible to make them out to be birds when they crouch on the ground. Although they have no shelter or other protection, this coloration quite compensates, deceiving even the sharp-eyed eagles and falcons that ever soar above the plains looking for something on which to pounce.

EARS IN QUEER PLACES.

Simply because our ears are on the sides of our heads it does not signify that the hearing apparatus of other creatures may not be located in different places, widely separated from those with which we usually associate the organs of hearing. The grasshoppers and crickets, for illustration, have their ears, or, more properly, auricular openings, situated in the leg at a spot about half way between the "ankle" and the "knee."

Examine a specimen of either of the insects mentioned, using a microscope for that purpose, and you will find that there is a bright, shiny spot, oval in form, on the tibia of each fore leg. For many years the naturalists were of the opinion that the spots in question were in some manner connected with the unharmonious music box which such insects always carry about with them.

This opinion was almost universal until within the last few years, when the opinion has been confirmed that these spots are in reality the ears of the insects.—Our Sunday Afternoon.

MOZART THE PRODIGY.

In one of the peaceful arts, we have the astonishing example of the Austrian musician and composer, Mozart. This lad was what we call a prodigy. He was the son of the bandmaster to the archbishop of the city of Salzburg. At four years of age—and you will admit that is truly young—he played the violin with the greatest ease, with an expression really wonderful. He also composed those old-fashioned dances, so quaint and sweet, called minuets, besides other simple pieces. At seven, he made a tour of Europe, giving concerts, playing before kings and queens, and surprising the whole musical world. Then, when he was about twelve, he began to write operas, and so original and delightful were these that he may be said to have founded a school or manner of writing musical compositions of a dramatic nature. After having done the work of two lifetimes, he died at the early age of thirty-nine.—"Old Heads on Young Shoulders," by Arthur Hoerber, in June St. Nicholas.

BOYS AND GREAT INVENTIONS.

The most inveterate grumblers at the restless energy of childhood cannot deny that it is sometimes productive of good. Without it there might, and probably would, have come a time when the genius of man would have invented the telescope, but it is certain that the time came a little sooner as a result of the restless movements of children.

As these particular young folk were the children of a Dutch spectacle-maker, it was not to be wondered at that the glasses their father used in his workshop should fall within reach of their investigating fingers. One day they carried them to the door of the shop, and amused themselves by viewing outside objects through their medium; and now came in the particular benefit to the world of the restlessness of childhood.

Looking through the glasses in the ordinary way soon became too tame for the children, and they proceeded to vary the performance. They put two glasses together, and eagerly peered through this new arrangement to see the effect upon the landscape. It was more startling than they had anticipated. The weathercock on the church-steeple had certainly undergone a change. It had suddenly advanced to meet them, and appeared within a short distance of their eyes.

Puzzled at this unlooked-for result of their experiment, the children called their father to see the strange sight, and were triumphant to find that his surprise was as great as their own.

But the old spectacle-maker was of a scientific turn of mind, and as he went back to his work his thoughts were busy with the strange result of the children's antics. He saw in the combination the possibility of making a scientific toy that should please those who had ceased to be children. When this toy, which was said to make distant objects appear close at hand, was described to Galileo, he at once perceived its value to one who desired to study the heavens. He set himself to work out the idea, and the telescope was the result.

The comfortable and convenient lamp-chimney of every-day use is also to be attributed to a boy's restlessness. Argand, a native of Switzerland, and a poor man, invented a lamp the wick of which was fitted into a hollow cylinder, that allowed a current of air to supply oxygen to the interior as well as the exterior of the circular flame.

The lamp was a success, but its inventor had never thought of adding a glass chimney, and probably never would have thought of it, had not his little brother been playing in his workroom while Argand was engaged with the burning lamp. The boy had gained possession of an old bottomless flask, and was amusing himself by putting it over various small articles in the room. Suddenly he placed it over the top of the lamp, and the flame instantly responded by shooting with increased brilliancy up the narrow neck of the flask.

Argand's ready brain at once caught the idea, and his lamp was perfected by the addition of a glass chimney.

A TREE TALK.

What a wonderful thing a tree is! A live thing—a useful thing—a beautiful thing—and so common that we scarcely think of it as a wonder at all.

Think of the great families of trees—the maple, the beech, the birch, the hemlock, the spruce, the oak—and so on and on. So many alike, and yet each one different! What a world of wonders!

In the human family there are oddities, you know, and so in the tree family.

There is the whistling tree, for instance. It grows in the West India Islands. It bears pods with open edges, and the wind passing through them makes the whistling sound which gives the tree its name.

Then there is the cow tree, which yields a delicious creamy milk. This tree grows in South America, and often looks like a dead tree, but if it is tapped the milk will flow out freely. Sunrise is "milking-time," when the natives come with their jugs, and fill them with the sweet, nourishing fluid.

Now, if only the bread-fruit tree grew near the cow tree, what a land that would be for little lovers of bread and milk! But this tree is found in the South Sea Islands. The fruit, looking like round balls, about as big as a baby's head, is baked just as we bake bread, and comes out looking and tasting like sweet, new bread.

There is a sneeze wood tree, a native of South Africa, which cannot be cut or sawn without causing violent sneezing.

Then, in India, there is the sorrowful tree, which blossoms only in the night; in Central America, the hand tree, which

has flowers shaped like a hand, with the fingers spread out; the grease tree, in China, from which beautiful candles are made; and in our own country the tooth-ache tree, so named because the bark is a cure for toothache.

These are by no means the only strange individuals in the great family of trees. What a pleasant study it would be to search them all out!

A PLAN WORTH TRYING.

"I must go and have something to warm me up," said one workman to another.

"How much will it cost you?" asked the other.

"Ten cents," was the reply.

"How long will that keep you warm?"

"Oh! for a little while, anyway. It's bitter cold."

"Then what will you do?"

"Take another."

"And will it warm any one else besides yourself?"

"Of course not. Why?"

"Go ahead, then, and warm up in your way, though I wish you'd tell me why a drunken man always freezes to death when a sober man lives. I'll try my way of warming up."

"What's that?"

"Why, a bushel of coal costs ten cents, and my wife and children can warm up with me, while our supper is cooking. I can keep warm enough now working."

"So can I, and I believe I'll try your plan once, Bob," concluded the first speaker.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE. PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

JANUARY 31, 1897.

The lad with the loaves and fishes.—John 6. 1-12.

THE PLACE.

"The Sea of Galilee." This celebrated sea is also called the Sea of Gennesaret and the Sea of Tiberias. In the Old Testament it is called the Sea of Chinnereth. It would be well to remember these names, as you will then better understand what you may in future read respecting this celebrated inland sea, or, as we would say, lake.

THE EXCITEMENT.

Jesus had now become popular, and never lacked for a congregation. Wherever he went the people flocked to hear him. The reason was because they saw him perform so many notable miracles, such as healing the sick, etc. They were not to blame for acting in this manner, for they had never seen such wonderful occurrences before.

THE INQUIRY.

Verse 5. This was natural. There was a great company of people; many of them were far from home, and the occasion was quite sufficient to occasion anxiety. Jesus knew what he intended to do, but he asked the question to try their faith. Read verse 7. Philip speaks about "two hundred pennyworth." The Roman penny which was then in use was equal to about fifteen cents of our money. Multiply this by 200, and then you have the number of dollars, about \$30.

ANDREW'S STATEMENT.

Verses 8 and 9. Five barley loaves and two small fishes were not a liberal supply for five thousand men, besides women and children. This is stated in the lesson, verse 10, and also in Matthew 14. 21. Contrasting the multitude to be fed with the supply of food excites our astonishment, for there is not the least similarity between them.

THE SAVIOUR'S COMMAND.

Verse 10. What an object lesson is now presented to our notice! The crowd is now seated. What a fine picnic this would be, and how suitable for a painter to depict on his canvas.

Observe how the Saviour acted, verse 11. He gave thanks. Do you always give thanks for the food you eat? Mark you, he does not give the people the food, but he commands the disciples to do this. He does not do for people what they can do for themselves. No doubt the people thankfully partook of what was given them.

RESULT.

The people were satisfied, but no doubt both they and the disciples were filled with surprise that there were twelve baskets full of fragments still remaining. The provision multiplied as it was needed. Here we see the Godhead of Christ. He is the Lord of the universe, hence he creates as the necessity requires. He is almighty, hence we should be encouraged to trust in him.