

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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Cheer Up!

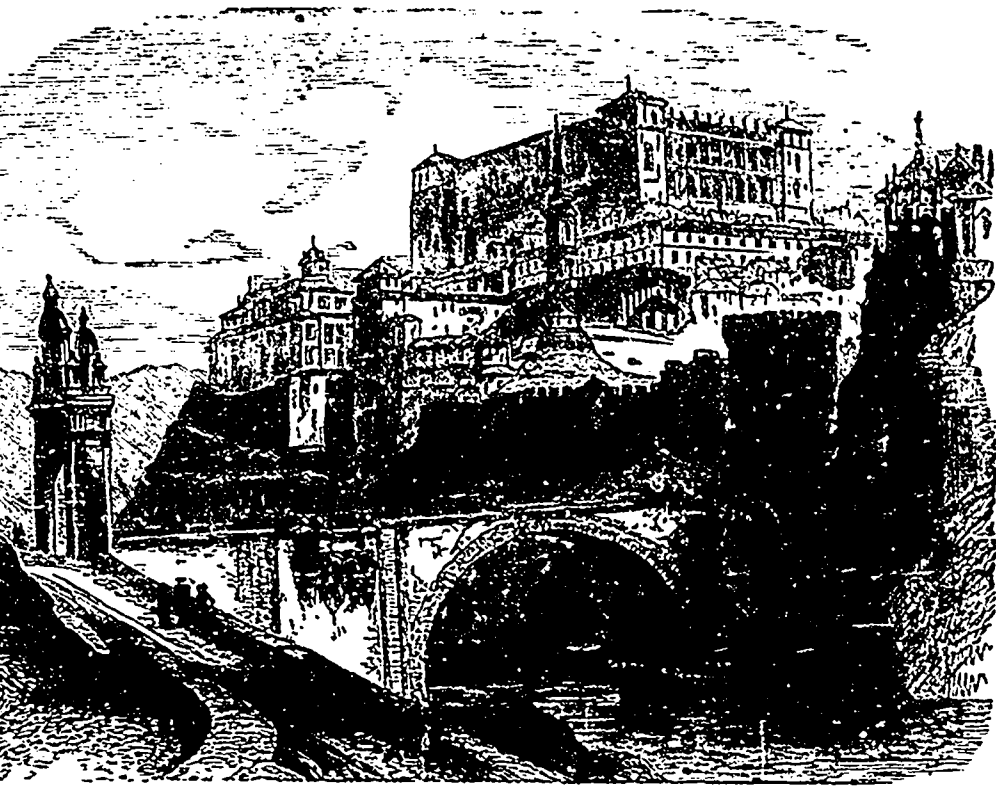
A little bird sings, and he sings all day—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 No matter to him if the skies are gray—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 He flies o'er the fields of waving corn,
 And over the ripening wheat:
 He answers the lark in the early morn,
 In cadences cheery and sweet;
 And only these two little words he sings—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 A message to earth which he gladly brings—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 He sings in a voice that is blithe and bold—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 And little cares he for the storm or cold—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 And when in the winter the snow comes down,
 And fields are all frosty and bare,
 He flies to the heart of the busy town,
 And sings just as cheerily there,
 He chirps from his perch on my window-sill—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 This message he brings with a right good will—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 This dear little messenger can but say,
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 As over the housetops he makes his way—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 Oh, let us all learn from this little bird
 A lesson we surely should heed;
 For if we all uttered but one bright word,
 The world would be brighter indeed!
 If only earth's children would blithely say,
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"
 How jolly a world would ours be to-day—
 "Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up!"

TOLEDO.

It was a fresh morning near the close of February when my friend, the Rev. Mr. Jameson, of Madrid, met me at the railway station in the south of that city for a trip to the ancient metropolis of Spain, Toledo. The sun shone with a comforting warmth, and the three hours' ride southward over the rolling plateau of Central Spain, which would have been pleasant in itself, was made doubly



SPANISH PRIEST.



TOLEDO.

so by the society and conversation of my companion. His full information with regard to the country and people, freely given, shortened the way both happily and instructively. It was agreeable, too, to note the graceful courtesies of the Spaniards in that too often most selfish place, the railway-carriage. On entering they would lift the hat and salute all in the compartment; at leaving they did the same with a kindly Adios! Did one open a basket of refreshments, he offered it to all with a smiling face that was a gratification even though you might be expected to decline. Americans might learn something from Spaniards on the railway.

This elevated plateau of old Castile has little beauty or attractiveness. The Castilian farmer has no love for shade-trees; indeed, he looks upon them with apprehension; hence these plains are treeless and cheerless. The villages are closely-packed clusters of houses with the church rising high above them, like a hen with her chicks about her. The open country is bare, and for nine months in the year barren of crops.

But the fifty miles are soon crossed, and Toledo suddenly rises to view—suddenly, for it has no suburbs. The rugged rock on which it is built is so encompassed (on three sides fully) by the dashing Tagus that the city stands out from the country about it like a fortress. Guarded by lofty walls, which surmount the granite cliffs, only the towers, and especially the huge Alcazar, appear as you approach the city.

The train draws up at the station outside of the city and its encircling river, but a rickety and rattling carriage drawn by mules receives you and dashes toward the portal, through it, over the historic bridge Alcantara, with the Tagus chafing its craggy banks below, through another arched and turreted portal, again through the noble Moorish gate of the Sun, between the solid walls, up and up, until you emerge within the defences and are deposited in the Zocodover, the little open space where the wits and gallants of Toledo in the olden time were wont to gather to exchange the news and retail the gossip of the day.

Toledo is full of attraction to the visitor for what it is as well as for what it has been. Its Oriental aspect; its narrow, steep, winding streets, descending and ascending continually, the blank walls of the tall stone houses with their closed gates studded with iron spikes, the Saracenic arches, the old synagogues, the churches associated with Ferdinand and Isabella, the vast and magnificent Gothic cathedral, and all that meets the

eye,—speak of wealth, luxury and power and of long centuries of exciting history. But the Toledo of to-day is a city of the past, save as its buildings recall that past. A Roman army captured it before our Lord was born; Gothic kings reigned here, under the Moors it grew in grandeur, and under the Christian Spaniards it was a centre of learning and of ecclesiastical as well as of civil power for Spain. Goths, Jews, Arabs and Christians adorned it with palace, synagogue, mosque and church. The huge square building seen so conspicuously in our illustration was rebuilt by Charles V., doubtless on the site of a Moorish palace, as is indicated by the title, Alcazar, the title given by the Arabs of Spain to their government houses. It is now used for a military school, a "West Point" for the army of Spain.

But with all these grand buildings rich in art and architecture, and with its lofty historic memories, Toledo is a dead city. No traffic resounds in its streets, even the manufacture of its famous "Toledo blades" is carried on without the walls. Its population has shrunk from two hundred thousand to twenty thousand. Many of its convents have been suppressed. Although it has more black-robed priests than it needs, their numbers and wealth are so reduced that they cannot fill even its narrow streets and give them life. The rumble of cart or carriage is almost unknown. Many of the churches are unused and closed. The old Inquisition has become a posada—a tavern.

I do not know that there is one Protestant in all Toledo, though my companion recognized in a shopkeeper from whom I bought a small memento of Toledo's cutlery a man who had attended Protestant services and seemed interested in the truth, but it is a glorious fact that the Gospel may be preached in Toledo if the churches of Christ will send their messengers thither; whilst it is a sad fact that our zeal so far fails to enter the doors opening so widely and so appealingly even in the ancient strongholds of fanatical zeal and blind superstition.

"I BELIEVE IN GOD."

This is what Paul said to the ship's company during the great storm that came upon them on their way to Rome. Many of you do not know all that is meant by "believing God." Had you been in Paul's place wouldn't you have

been a little afraid in the storm, even though God had told you he would keep you from harm?

The other day, Bessie was walking with her papa when a cow ran at them, bellowing and shaking her head. Bessie was dreadfully scared, and said, "Oh, papa! do let me run, quick!"

But papa held her hand tight and said, "Stand perfectly still, and you shall not be hurt."

And when she looked up and saw that he was calm and even smiling, she felt safe, and only clung closer to him.

The cow ran up close, and stopped and licked her papa's hand, for she was a pet, and ran to him because she was glad to see him, and expected to be fed. But before Bessie knew this she felt safe, because she believed her father when he said she should not be hurt.

What is the way God wants us to believe him. He tells us that he will forgive our sins for Christ's sake, and wants us to feel perfectly sure that we are saved, because he has promised it. He is so much greater and stronger than your father that it ought to be easier to believe him. The winds and waves and light-

nings are as harmless with him as the pet cow with Bessie's papa.

Now, can you not believe as Paul did, that what he has promised he will do, and that he does forgive all your sins now, for Jesus' sake, and loves you because he has promised it, if you asked in the name of Jesus?

COUNTING THE STARS.

I was walking along one winter's night, hurrying toward home, with my little maiden at my side. Said she,

"Father, I am going to count the stars."

"Very well," I said, "go on."

By-and-bye I heard her counting, "Two hundred and twenty-three, two hundred and twenty-four, two hundred and twenty-five. O dear, I had no idea there were so many!"

Oh! dear friends, I sometimes say in my soul: "Now, Master, I am going to count thy benefits." Soon my heart sighs, not with sorrow, but burdened with such goodness, and I say to myself, "I had no idea there were so many."—
 Mark Guy Pearce.

While escorting a lady home the other evening, a popular doctor attempted to relieve her cough by giving her a lozenge. He told her to allow it to dissolve in her mouth. No relief was experienced. The doctor felt chagrined the next day when the lady sent him a coat button, with a note saying that he must have given her the wrong kind of lozenge, and that he might need this one.



SPANISH LADY