

February

Now who would guess in this wild, but silent,
That the birds were warm under our feet?
Of who would guess, in such a storm as these,
That a voice was as in the hearts of the trees?

Would any one think do you suppose,
These brown stocks would ever produce a rose—
Brown and fretted, tossed to and fro,
Coated with snow and whitened by snow?

Plank and bare is the meadow sile;
Dreary the woods, the distances wide;
Yet the looms of God, unheard, unseen,
Are weaving their draperies of green.

The tender may still ever wait for a command,
The violet purple he holds in his hand
Thousands of servants are working his will,
In the underground spaces vast and still.

Farther and louder the wild winds blow,
But we who are in the secret know
That short is the time of their savage power—
The sun comes nearer hour by hour.

And what of the heart that is beaten and tossed,
Chilled by sorrow till hope is lost?
Can there be life in the frozen earth,
And for human hearts no summer birth?

Is there a sun for the elm and the rose,
Shining and winning till life overflows;
While the soul lies desolate, waiting in vain,
With no power in the heaven to loosen its chain?

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, MARCH 5, 1892.

HOLD UP THE LIGHT.

THE famous Eddystone lighthouse, off the coast of Cornwall, was first built in a fanciful way, by the learned and eccentric Winstanley. On its sides he put various boastful inscriptions. He was very proud of his structure, and from his lofty balcony used boldly to defy the storm, crying, "Blow, O winds! Rise, O ocean! Break forth, ye elements, and try my work!" But one fearful night the sea swallowed up the tower and its builder.

The lighthouse was built a second time of wood and stone by Rudgard. The form was good, but the wood gave hold for the elements, and the builder and his structure perished in the flames.

Next the great Smeaton was called. He raised a cone from the solid rock upon which it was built, and riveted it to the rock, as the oak is fastened to the earth by its roots. From the rock of the foundation he took the rock of the superstructure. He carved upon it no boastful inscriptions like those of Winstanley, but on its lowest course he put, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it;" and on its keystone, above the lantern, the simple tribute, "Laus Deo!" and the structure still stands, holding its beacon light to storm-tossed mariners.

Fellow-workers for the salvation of men, Christ, the light, must be held up before them or they will perish. Let us, then, place him on no superstructure of our own device. Let us rear no tower of wood, or wood and stone. But taking the Word of God for our foundation, let us build our structure upon its massive, solid truth, and on every course put Smeaton's humble inscription, that we may be sure that the lighthouse will stand.

SCENES IN CHINA.

A SCENE on the street where the peddler is offering something for sale and the barber is shaving the head of a customer. But what strange scene is this where men are running through the fire? It is a festival of life, and occurs in China on the reputed birthday of the Taou gods, and is observed by the running of the men barefooted through a heap of burning charcoal that is generally twelve feet square.

A large number of people assembled to witness it. When all is ready the heathen priests rush wildly through the fire followed by others, while deafening sounds of horns and gongs drown the shrieks and groans of the men whose feet are burning, and who sometimes fall down in the fire and are burned to death.

A missionary in China writes about some Chinese children. She says: "I saw a poor little girl the other day sitting under an arch on a dirty bit of matting, and holding a basin in her hand begging money from people who went past. When I went close up I saw that she was quite blind. Her cruel father had put out her eyes so that people might pity her and give her money. She looked a dear, bright little thing, and told me her name—just four years old. When I passed again she was singing to herself. I felt so sorry to see her all alone, with no one to love her or take care of her, and that she did not even know that her Father in heaven was watching over her as she sat in the crowded street.

"I saw some little girls to-day in our school here, who were much happier. They had bright eyes, and were busy reading, and writing, and sewing. Two of the little girls were helping to get dinner ready, great big jars of boiled rice, snowy white, and little saucers of green peas and pods. One of them went to a cupboard and got out a great many little basins, more than thirty, and laid them neatly out on the long tables in the girls' dining-room, and beside each she laid two long, thin sticks, instead of a spoon, for them to eat with.

"One little girl did not want any dinner, because she was sick. I went up to see her. She was lying on a mat on her bed. At first I could not see anything but a big bundle on the bed, because she was frightened, and hid under the thick quilt, which was blanket and sheets to her all in one. However, I poked in my hand where I thought her head should be, and out it popped—such a little black, untidy mop of hair. Her eyes said she was pleased, and soon she found her voice. Her name is Kau; in English it would be Monkey. If you were sick you would not like to lie on Monkey's bed. It is so hard, and instead of a pillow she has a little round wooden stool for her head. She does not seem to mind, and will soon be well, I hope, and able to play with the others. They do enjoy a game, and they skip very nicely."

Another missionary writes of a pupil that came to the girls' school: "She was a little girl robed in bright scarlet, with green trousers and a gorgeous bespangled head-dress. Her father, Yao, is an inquirer, and a very interesting man. He has four sons, the second of whom is at our school, and this little daughter, who is dreadfully spoiled. I gave her a little bit of hemming to do, and she put in three or four stitches for her day's work, and took it home for her mother to finish. Next day I ripped out the sewing, and told her she must do it herself, as I wanted her to learn. She calmly told me she would not, that she should take it home again for her mother to do! She is a day scholar, and goes home with her brother for meals, so costs us nothing. She won't read, and at every chance runs away home, and, if brought back, throws herself on the floor and howls."

A TRUE GHOST STORY.

ABOUT a mile beyond the Beech Hill stood Squire Macdonald's store, and one dreary night in late autumn there came thither first Rory O'More, and then Sandy Big John, and finally Alec Gillies, all in a high state of excitement, and asserting with much positiveness that they had seen the ghost on Beech Hill. Now the squire was a shrewd, hard-headed, and unsuperstitious a Scotchman as ever traded tea for butter or sugar for eggs, and he had no more faith in the Beech Hill ghost than in the man in the moon.

But this time the testimony of the terrified witnesses happened to agree remarkably. The ghost had appeared to all in precisely the same form, namely, as a white, shapeless thing that rolled along the ground, uttering shrill and threatening shrieks. The matter was surely worth looking into.

"Hark ye, now," said the squire at last, "I believe you are nothing better than a parcel of foolish boys; and to prove it, I'll go up to the Beech Hill myself and see what it is that has come so nigh scaring the life out of you."

Thus speaking, he got his coat and hat, and calling upon them to follow, set off for the scene of the ghost's walk. Rory, and Sandy, and Alec would much rather have been excused, but pride overcame their timidity, and they followed in their leader's track. Hardly had they reached the foot of the hill than the shrieks they had heard before came to their ears.

"There it is again!" exclaimed Rory, with trembling lips. "Can ye no hear it, squire?"

"To be sure I can," responded the squire, stoutly, "and I'm going to see what it is. Come along."

The distance between the doughty squire and his followers increased as he went on, while the shrieks grew stronger with each forward step.

When about the middle of the ascent he saw the ghost. It was as the men had reported, a white shapeless thing rolling upon the ground, and from it undoubtedly came the piercing cries which had proved so alarming.

Going straight up to the thing, the squire touched it with his foot, then bent down to feel it with his hand, and then burst out into a roar of laughter that at first startled the three farmers almost as much as the ghost's shrieks.

"Come here, you fools!" he shouted. "Come and see what your ghost is."

In a hesitating way they drew near, and examined the cause of their affright. It was a white meal bag containing two very lively young pigs, which had in some way fallen off a farmer's waggon into the middle of the road, there to prove a source of terror to the superstitious and perhaps not altogether sober passers-by.—J. M. Oxley, in Harper's Young People.

THE ELEPHANT.

THE principal peculiarity of the elephant is his trunk. It consists of thousands of small muscles interlaced, so that by means of these the animal can either stretch it out or draw it in, and turn it round in any way that it likes. It has two holes in it something like nostrils. It has also two little projections at the tip, like a thumb and small finger.

The elephant is the biggest four-footed animal that lives upon land—in fact he looks quite a mountain of flesh; yet he generally obeys his keeper as quietly as if he were a spaniel. He looks rather larger than he actually is. It is not often that he is more than nine feet high.

In the Jardin des Plantes, at Paris, an elephant had been turned out of his house to allow of a chase of the rats that devoured his food. The rats ran about in all directions, and while the elephant was stooping to pick up a morsel of bread which one of the crowd had thrown to him, a rat, fancying he saw a means of escape, took refuge in the interior of his trunk. The elephant made frantic efforts to relieve himself of his unwelcome visitor, but in vain. Suddenly he paused, and seemed to reflect; then he went to his basin, filled his trunk with water, and amidst the great excitement of the lookers-on, ejected the water and the unfortunate rat with one sublime effort.