

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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The Magi.

THEY came from the East, from the source of light

When ages ago the day was born;
Whence rides the sun in his wondrous might,
His chariot wet with the dew of morn.
They turned from the sun to track a star,
But never for this did their zeal grow less;
And they hailed at last, after journeying far,
The glorious Sun of Righteousness.

They came from the East, the land of spice,
And laden with perfumes rich and rare;
A fragrant and precious sacrifice
Like incense of humble and holy pray'r,
They found a flower in Bethlehem's inn
Far sweeter than in the Orient grows;
Unsoil'd of earth, untouch'd of sin,
Was the bud of Sharon's lovely Rose.

They came from the East, and of kingly state,

Their peers had been in their native land;
Yet now for them all it was meet to mate
With the lowly carpenter's family band.
For in that infant meek and fair,
They marked the signs of lofty birth;
And gladly they gave him homage there—
The rightful King of all the earth.

SNOWBALLING.

A good round of snowballing at play-time is delightful. We have no sympathy with those boys who think it fun to "shy" a snowball at an old lady's umbrella, for they will be afraid of the first policeman they meet; neither have we any fancy for the boy who will snowball a timid girl; and we scorn still more the boy who will take a mean advantage of a shivering little fellow who cannot defend himself; but we enjoy the sight of a fairly-divided group of boys who have chosen sides and make merry in the play-ground. Our young friends in the picture are having a high time of it, two of them defending the snow fort against the other two. All went on merrily enough till one boy on the attacking side lost his temper and wanted to fight. It was a pity he had not better self-control, for the other boys were so ashamed of him that they rolled him over and over in the snow, and almost made a snow man of him. The real temper and disposition of boys come out very soon in the play-ground. We wish boys would learn to control their temper always. We used to write in the old "copy-book" days, "Anger is a weakness of the understanding." It surely is that. A boy who is soon angry has a weak understanding, and something worse.

If we could whisper in the ears of all our school-boy friends, we would say, "Be brave, noble, good-tempered boys, and never take a mean advantage of the weak, the cripple, or the timid. Learn in early life that the noblest conquest ever made is the conquest of your own heart."

A NEW YEAR'S LAGGARD.

BY CHARLES N. SINNETT.

"THERE, don't be looking from the window any longer, Martha. We've got a lot of extra cooking to do, though I don't suppose that any one will think of making us a New Year's call. It is bad enough to be slow and puttering in the old year. But to begin as a New Year's laggard is still worse."

Granny Holcomb did not speak that sharply, though. There was a sad, pitiful ring in all the words. She seemed to be looking across the hills toward the old cemetery more than at her granddaughter.

The girl started nervously, though. The bright colour swept into her pale cheeks as she turned away from the west window.

"Yes, grandmother," she answered, pleasantly.

But to herself she confessed, "I am, indeed, a New Year's laggard. There is Nathan Perry going over the hill. It's more than two months ago that I made up my mind to urge him to go to our Epworth League meetings. And I haven't said a word to him yet."

She knew that the young man was hurrying along, and would soon be out of sight among the trees of the hollow.

"I don't want you to help me with the work here," Granny said, quickly. "You've been kept in the house a good deal lately. You need the fresh air more than I do. I wish you would run down to the store and get me some spice."

"There is old Peter Murdock," Martha quickly thought. "He will meet Nathan. If he stops for only a few moments he will have something to say to him against the church and its work. And it always seems as though Nathan was greatly influenced by him. He will not be in the right frame of mind to listen to anything which I may say."

But, though her hands shook and her heart beat fast, she resolved as she went on to speak to the young man about his duty of attending the Epworth League.

She was sure that he knew why she seemed so nervous when she came up to him. And how his eyes twinkled, as they

"Yes, that's it," Martha laughed back to him.

Nathan was so surprised at her success in controlling her nervousness that he said, "You—you think I could help there?"

"We all do. You could help in the singing. And then you could speak and pray. You do not do things by halves when you are interested in them. And you must think much about leading an earnest Christian life."

"Well, you must have read my mind," the young man said, with a thoughtful look upon his face. "I did not dream any one guessed what I was thinking. I've been a great laggard about doing my duty."

"And I, too," said a trembling voice, as a man stepped out of the thick spruce bushes at Martha's side.

"Why, Mr. Holcomb!" said Nathan; "I am so glad you've got back again."

"Father!" was all that the girl could utter.

"Yes, I've come back," the man said, as he grasped her hand. "And I came back last New Year's Day. But it didn't seem to me as though I was as right and true as I ought to be. I've prayed and worked hard for the Lord all this year. But my courage failed about making myself known, after I've been a wanderer from home these ten years. So I slipped into the woods here and hid. But you've been so brave, Martha, to speak out to him as duty called you—oh, I could see how hard it was—that! feel I can keep in the right by your help."

"I'm sure you can," said Nathan, "and I shall run in and see you often as I go to the young people's meeting."

"How strange that I thought I saw Peter Murdock coming to hinder Nathan from heeding my words," spoke Martha, with the tears of joy shining in her eyes. "And it was my dear father with a heart full of love for the Master! I do believe that grandmother felt that her prayers for you were answered, she's been getting so many good things ready."

"Felt she'd forgive—forgive her New Year's laggard," said Robert Holcomb, with happy thanksgiving.—*Epworth Herald.*

HOW SHALL SANTA CLAUS COME.

OLD SANTA CLAUS has so many young friends to visit, that it has been necessary to provide for him the very swiftest conveyances. Accordingly, a hundred years ago, we all, by common consent, voted him the use of a beautiful sleigh, with swift reindeer—which could outrun horses—to draw it. But lately the reindeer have been out-done in speed by railroad cars, by electric cars, and even by bicycles. One rider, the other day, made a mile in less than two minutes on a bicycle. What think you? Would we do well to take away that old sleigh from Santa Claus,—it must be nearly worn out by this time. And then sometimes Christmas fails to have snow ready for him—and provide for the old fellow a brand-new bicycle? Or would it be better to build a railroad track up to the 'land of perpetual snow,' so that he can bring a much larger load of good things than his old worn-out sleigh will hold?

Avoid any action or word which may not be in harmony with the will of God.



SNOWBALLING.

Again the girl's cheeks reddened. That trip would give her a splendid opportunity of speaking to Nathan of his duty. Her path to the store would lead her to meet the young man in the grove.

But something seemed to whisper to her, "You've neglected to speak to him for such a long time. You're nervous too: it all will do no good."

And Martha quickly spoke, "Why, grandmother, I can help you here and go on the errand too."

But granny said firmly, "I must have the spice now, my dear."

And away went Martha down the hill. Would it be of any use to ask Nathan to come to the young people's meetings when she had waited so long to ask him?

That sharp question came to her again as she walked on. The answer seemed to be plainly before her eyes as she looked away to the south end of the spruce woods.

always did when he was ready to make her merry, teasing answers.

How quickly he spoke up, too. "A happy New Year, Martha. Glad to see you out; was afraid, after that big Epworth League meeting which you had at the old church last week, that we shouldn't see anything more of you for a long while."

"Peter met him! Peter met him!" was the truth which the girl's heart seemed to beat out with its quick pulsations.

She was silent a few seconds. Then though her voice shook some, she said plainly, "I am sure you will be at our next meeting, Nathan."

"What makes you think that?" he laughed.

And before an answer could be made he added, "Guess it must be because you think you read my mind as clearly as I see how afraid you were to speak to me about coming."