

The Snowbirds.

- "Pretty little snowbirds,
Sang a tiny and—
"Pretty little snowbirds,
Where can you have strayed?"
- "When the sparkling snowflakes
Fall upon your head,
Where do you find shelter?
Where's your little bed?"
- "Pretty little snowbirds,
Aren't you out to-day?
Don't you wish the winter
Soon will haste away?"
- "No, dear little maiden,
How do I ever replied,
While they lightly bounded
Never to her side.
- "Fear we not the snowflakes
I deem soft and white,
Sparkling like rich jewels
And the sunbeams bright;
- "For our robe of feathers
Keeps us warm and nice;
So we face the winter
With the snow and ice.
- "And we sing as bothly
As we gaily roam,
As you, little maiden,
In your sheltered home."
- "Jesus loves the snowbirds,"
Thus the men on said,
As up a hill they drew
Laid the hot fair head.
- "I'm so glad He gave them
Jack is soft and warm,
That the pretty snowbirds
May not feel the storm?"

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

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WHICH WAS THE BRAVER?

They were looking at the ice on the river one day early in the winter. The ponds were frozen and the Branch was frozen, but no one yet had had a skate on the deep and rapid river and all the boys were aching to try it. It lay before them frozen from shore to shore, a smooth expanse of dark and glassy ice, most tempting to the sight of any boy, and to the little group of lads who stood eyeing it it was almost irresistible. They had been skating on the Branch, so they had their skates in their hands, and every now and then one of them would venture out upon the ice and stamp about it to try it. At last one lad came back from one of these short excursions.

"Pooh!" said he stamping, "it's safe, safe enough for an elephant, and I am going to try it. I dare any one of you fellows to skate across with me. Dare, dare, double dare you, Fritz Ward, to do it," and down he set to put on his skates. "What!" said Jack, "nobody coming?"

Not you, Fritz Ward? The champion skater of the town refuses. Well, well."

"No, I'm not going," answered Fritz. But his refusal was not because he was afraid or because he did not want to go, for he was all eagerness to be off, but he had promised his mother that he would not go on the river until it had been pronounced perfectly safe, and he never yet had broken his word to her, and that was all that held him.

Jack was cutting arctic circles near the shore and watching them, smiling. "Well, good-bye, 'land cats," said he, and giving his hand a little mocking flourish, off he flew straight towards the middle of the river, and his light, boyish figure seemed to skim the ice like a bird; but light as he was, it bent beneath him as he sped. The lads on the bank saw it and cried, "Come back," but he never heeded, in fact he was afraid to turn, and in another instant down he went. His comrades stared as if they were dreaming at that little black hole in the ice where Jack went down; and though those boys now are middle-aged men, yet they can shut their eyes, any one of them to-day, and see again that snow-clad shining landscape, and the gleaming river with that little black hole in it well towards the middle. It was but an instant when they saw Jack's head once more, and his face was turned towards them. He threw his arms out on the ice and it broke beneath his weight, but before he sank he grasped it again with his other arm and it bore him for a moment, only to break again, but it brought him a little nearer to his friends. Instantly he comprehended what he had to do. He had to break his way bit by bit through the ice across that dreadful river. His friends could not help him, so like the gallant lad he was, he fought on inch by inch for his life, while his friends on shore cheered him all they could.

"Fellows," said Fritz Ward, watching him keenly, "he will never reach us without help; take off your comforters"—they all wore gay worsted scarfs knotted around their necks, and each of them was fully two yards long. "Knot them together tightly," Fritz continued. "I know the bottom here, and I am going out as far as I can to meet him. I shall throw him these and you must help me. I am going in up to my waist, and you must all throw yourselves on your faces and work yourselves out one after the other. Each fellow hang on to the other, and you, Joe Anderson, come next to me and steady me."

It was planned and done in a minute. Fritz, with the coil of comforters ten yards long went out until the ice cracked beneath him, and then he let himself down into the water. Joe Anderson, who was the lightest boy there, had cautiously worked himself out and lay near enough to give a steady hand to Fritz, who was in up to his arm pits, but his arms were free.

"Just a little nearer, old boy," shouted Fritz to Jack, "and I'll throw it," and poor Jack struggled a moment more. "Now," cried Fritz, and threw the rope, and the end lay within Jack's reach. He grasped it and Fritz drew him inch by inch through the splintering ice until he had him by the collar; then the ice broke under Joe and let him down, but he landed on his feet, and together he and Fritz tied one end of the comforters under Jack's arms and tossed the other end to the other boys. Then somehow they got him on to the ice and the other boys pulled him cautiously ashore. After that Fritz and Joe were helped out, and the dry boys piled their overcoats on to the wet boys, and they took Jack, who was by that time quite unconscious, safe home.

When Jack was convalescing from his attack of pneumonia the first boy he wanted to see was Fritz. He held out his hand to him with a smile.

"Oh, boy," said he, "if it hadn't been for you I wouldn't be here."

"Pshaw," answered Fritz, "it was the comforters that did the business."

Ah," said Jack, "the comforters were a very good thing, but I would never have got hold of them if it hadn't been for you. You need not try to get out of it. If you hadn't been as quick as thought and cheek to l of pack beside, I wouldn't be in this world now. And the sense you've got too, Fritz," Jack went on reflectively;

"first time I ever knew you not to take a dare. How did it happen?"

"Oh," answered Fritz, laughing, "that was not any sense of mind. I would have been after you fast enough if I hadn't promised my mother that I wouldn't go on the river that day."

"Well," said Jack, "my old doctor says there is a difference between courage and foolhardiness, and it is pretty plain which quality he thinks I have shown the most of recently; but in the future I am going to keep what little courage I have left to use when it is needed, instead of fooling it away in such a scrape as this."

All this happened years ago, but the lesson Jack then learned has never been forgotten. He has had plenty of battles to fight since then, and he has fought them bravely; but his old foolhardy, daring ways, which so threatened to injure his character, he left behind him forever on that terrible day when he fell through the ice into Green River.

ABOUT POETRY.

Did you ever make poetry? I have. Leastways I have sometimes got the ends of the lines to juggle together, and if you succeed in doing that, and people are in a hurry they will call you a poet—and some will frown on you for an idiot, and some will admire you for a genius, but that last class is thinning away.

I have never been quite able to understand it, but I think we must all have been born poets and got spoiled somehow in the handling. For every child loves poetry at first, then doesn't love it a bit, and then grows madly fond of it, and then cools down and wonders what people can see in it.

If I wanted to be famous, this is the sort of thing that I would try to make—

One thing at a time,
And that done well,
Is a very good rule,
As many can tell.

How many millions of people have quoted that bit of poetry! Between ourselves, I believe it is better known than anything in Shakespeare! And if I felt very, very ambitious I would aim at something of this sort—

WINTER JEWELS.

A million little diamonds
Twinkled in the trees;
And all the little maidens said,
"A jewel, if you please!"
But while they held their hands outstretched
To catch the diamonds gay,
A million little sunbeams came
And stole them all away.

Would you like to know who wrote these poems? So would I! They are amongst the things written by Anon. You understand? At the end of many a bright gem of poetry you find the word Anon. He is the oldest poet in existence; you find him writing in the gift books of a century ago, and there is something by him in the corner of almost every country paper still. Yet I have searched and searched in vain to find him; perhaps it is his modesty that keeps him so obscure.

Can it be because simple poetry is really so difficult to make that some of the greatest minds have tried it? Here is a little gem, for instance, by Robert Louis Stevenson—"Treasure Island" Stevenson, you know, whose recent death we all deplore:

MY BED IS A BOAT.

My bed is like a little boat;
Nurse helps me in when I embark;
She gives me in my sailor's coat,
And starts me in the dark.

At night I go on board and say
Good-night to all my friends on shore;
I shut my eyes, and sail away,
And see and hear no more.

And sometimes things to bed I take,
As prudent sailors have to do.
Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,
Perhaps a toy or two.

All night across the dark we steer;
But when the day returns at last,
Safe in my room, beside the pier,
I find my vessel fast.

Where can I Find the Master?

From the German of Christian Augustus Bahr

Where can I find the Master,
That I his face may greet?
What teacher-kind or pastor
Will guide me to his feet,
That he may daily break me
My share of living bread,
And by his grace may take me
The path my feet should tread?

Within his Word then I find him,
His quick'ning Spirit's there;
The Father has designed him
Heaven's wicket-gate to prayer.
That soul, God will absolve him,
Who sins in carnal pride;
His sins he will erase him,
Who trusts the Crucified.

Within the bread he's hidden,
Within the wine that's poured,
And sinners all are bidden
To seat them at the board;
Go there, go there repenting;
Take thou the humblest place,
To his sweet will consenting,
And trusting in his grace.

Seek him in the communion
Of those who speak his name,
Together bound in union,
And warmed with holy flame.
He looks on all his members,
And gives each soul release;
His promise still remembers,
And bids them go in peace.

Within the heart he's dwelling,
If welcome he receive;
To him thy sorrows telling,
Who can alone relieve.
To those who show them willing,
In his great day of power,
Their souls with rapture filling
In the espousal hour.

Last, seek him in his heaven,
The place he doth prepare
For all earth's souls forgiven,
His blessedness to share.
Ay, there the Lord will meet thee,
For thus the promise lies,
In heaven's own garden greet thee,
The new, fair paradise.

HARD WORK.

Boys, do not shun hard work. Go at it; rejoice in it; it is a blessing to you. And understand us. By hard work we do not mean study, or sticking closely to keeping books, keeping store or teaching school, or any of the professional pursuits. These are all honourable, and when closely followed exhaust the nervous energy and make men tired too.

But by hard work we mean work that requires a great deal of muscular force, such as farming, chopping, rolling logs, quarrying rock, doing carpenter work, blacksmithing, laying brick, carrying the hod, and working in the forges, furnaces, rolling mills, mines, and car shops. This kind of work develops muscular strength, the power of physical endurance, grit, courage and good health.

Said an old man now up in the eighties, to me a year ago, "When I was fifteen years old I was a weak, spindly-kind of a boy, and went into a blacksmith's shop, learned the trade, worked at it eighteen years, and forged out a constitution worth a million dollars." He has ever been a healthy, vigorous man, and old as he is still walks the streets, perk, cheerful, and straight as an Indian's arrow.

Hard work is good medicine for boys, and especially for young men.

ABOUT TOBACCO.

So much has been said in these days for and against the use of tobacco that any advice may seem stale and unprofitable, but I cannot but feel that a few words on the subject may be of use. In the first place, the nicotine, a poisonous principle in tobacco, deadens the sensibility of the taste. In children the taste is most perfect, being a source of unalloyed pleasure, and anything that would impair that sense must deprive one of much enjoyment. In the next place, the smoke of tobacco inhaled in the mouth diminishes the amount of saliva, and as this juice is the first that, mixed with the food, assists in digestion, dyspepsia and stomach trouble are liable to result.