

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

TORONTO, AUGUST 31, 1895.

VOL. XV.]

## A HARD BATTLE.

"A BOX! A box for Reeve and Marcia!" exclaimed papa, as he opened the mail from the North. "And all the way from Chicago, too. From Aunt Emma, I do believe."

When the box was opened, there, in a nest of soft, white cotton, lay two large eggs, ornamented in beautiful colors. And, wonderful to tell, these eggs had covers which, when lifted up, showed them to be full of sugar-plums. But those lovely boxes were very frail, and in their long, rough journey, one of the covers was badly crushed.

"Sister can have that. I'll have the good one," said the little boy.

He was looked at with surprise, for he had always seemed a generous little fellow.

"My dear," asked mamma, "would you do so selfish—so unmanly a thing as that? Run away for a little while, and think about it."

"I don't wish to think about it!" he replied excitedly. "I want the good one."

After that no more was said. He began to walk about the room. His face was flushed, and he looked very unhappy. If he chanced to come near papa, papa did not seem to see him, he was so busy reading the newspaper.

After walking awhile, he went to the other side of the room, where mamma was bathing and dressing his little sister. He was very fond of his mamma. When she was sometimes obliged to punish him, as soon as it was over he would say:

"Wipe my tears! Kiss me!" So now, when his dear mamma did not seem to see that she had a little boy any more, he was cut to the heart.

At last he went into grandma's room. Now, he and grandma were great friends. Many happy hours did he spend in her lap, hearing stories; and she called him her "blessed boy!" But now, alas! she was so busy with her knitting, that she took no notice of him whatever! This was dreadful!

He climbed up into a chair, and sat down. An evil spirit seemed to whisper, "Don't give up;" and so he began again his miserable walk. For nearly one hour did this little boy fight his terrible battle with selfishness, until at last he could stand it no longer. He came to mamma and said, in a pleasant voice:

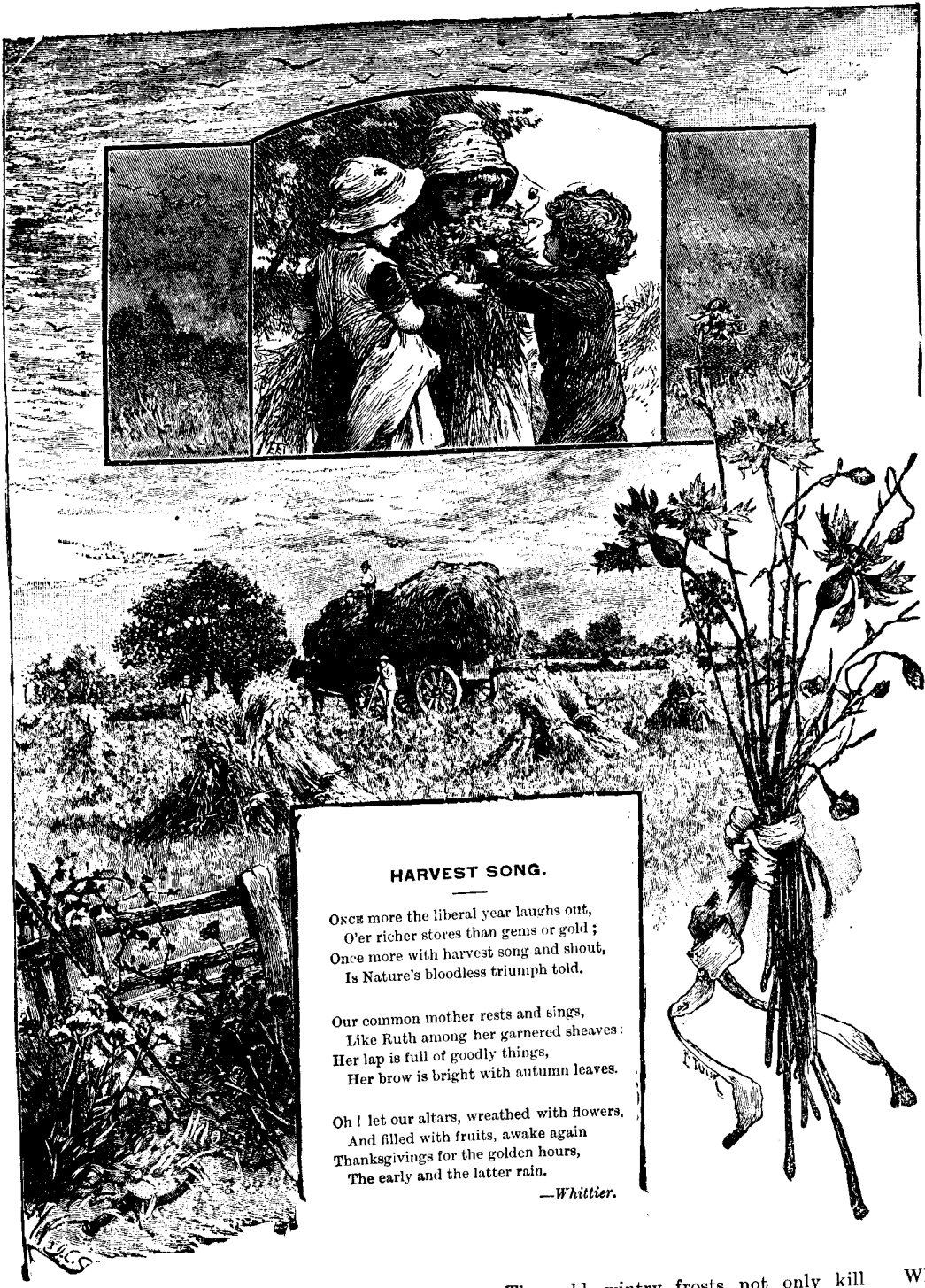
"I will take the broken one; sister can have the perfect one." Then, when papa and mamma had kissed him, and he had rushed into grandma's loving arms, what a load of unhappiness was lifted from his heart!—*Little Men and Women.*

## FREEZING THE FARM UP.

PEOPLE who shiver with cold do not always understand the importance and value of the frost. God who "scattereth the hour frost like ashes," and before whose cold "who can stand?" (Psalm cxlvii. 16, 17), does all his work in wisdom; but many men do not fully appreciate how much a freezing of the ground does to set

at liberty the plant-food locked up in almost all soils.

Water, in freezing, expands about one-eighth its bulk with tremendous force; and if confined in the strongest rock and frozen, will burst it asunder. The smallest particles of soil, which are in fact only minute bits of rock, as the microscope will show, if frozen while moist are broken still finer. This will go on all winter in every part of the field or garden reached by the frost; and as most soils contain more or less elements that all growing plants or crops need, a good freezing is equivalent to adding manures or fertilizers. Hence it is desirable to expose as much of the soil as possible to frost action, and the deeper the better, for the lower soil has been less drawn upon, and is richer in plant-food. We know that in spring the ground "breaks up," and sometimes there are great holes up, and sometimes there are great holes made in the middle of the roads. This is because the water which has expanded in the frost of winter into ice, lifting and moving all the soil, now melts away, and allows the earth to break in pieces and drop down.



### HARVEST SONG.

ONCE more the liberal year laughs out,  
O'er richer stores than gems or gold;  
Once more with harvest song and shout,  
Is Nature's bloodless triumph told.

Our common mother rests and sings,  
Like Ruth among her garnered sheaves:  
Her lap is full of goodly things,  
Her brow is bright with autumn leaves.

Oh! let our altars, wreathed with flowers,  
And filled with fruits, awake again  
Thankgivings for the golden hours,  
The early and the latter rain.

—Whittier.

The cold wintry frosts not only kill weeds and germs of disease, and make the air pure and healthy, but they also save poor farmers a deal of hard work, in spading, digging, ploughing and making the soil ready for the seed.

### "HE SAVED OTHERS, HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE."

CARL SPRINGEL was the lame son of a railway official in South Germany. Wilhelm Springel, his father, among other duties, performed that of keeping watch on stormy nights over the great bridge known as the Devil's Gulch Bridge, which spanned a terrible cleft in the rocks, two hundred feet wide and a hundred and fifty deep.

In a ravine below a mountain stream struggled and fought its way into the valley—deep, deep down it seemed to lie at ordinary times, but in winter weather the stream became a torrent of tremendous force, and rose to a terrific height.

Such a sudden swell took place after twenty-four hours of and continued rain.

Wilhelm Springel was, of course, on duty all day, and, not coming home towards evening, Carl set out to pay him a visit at his post, carrying with him his father's supper.

The night was one of black darkness, but the lame lad struggled along on his crutches, the breath half blown out of his feeble body, his ears dinned by the fury of the storm. He was within a hundred yards of the bridge—renowned in the neighborhood as a triumph of engineering skill—when a stronger blast than usual made him totter on his crutches, while, at the same moment, an awful crash made itself heard above the raging of the storm.

It was—it could be nothing else but the bridge giving way, Carl felt sure.

In an agony of haste and terror he pushed on towards the spot, calling frantically on his father's name. But how could he hear him through the tumult?

The lad pressed on still further. He was on the railroad track now, and the first object he stumbled against was his father's hand-truck, the red light yet burning on it, but no father near.

And beyond that—ten yards further? Ah, the sight was too awful!

The dim glare of the lantern showing a cruel gap where the bridge had been; a fearful chaos of shattered masonry and timber, and boiling waters.

"Father, father!" cried Carl again in his horror, but no voice answered.

"He has gone down with the bridge!" shrieked the poor fellow.

For a second or two he lingered as if paralyzed by the sight of the fearful chasm, holding tightly the useless supper can; then a sudden thought filled his soul to overflowing, and gave him new strength to do and dare. The night train! That was due. If father lay below in that awful gulf, who would warn it of its danger?

Who would hold it back from that leap into nothingness which it must inevitably take if left to pursue its course unchecked.

"I must do it," said Carl with clenched teeth.

Up above no signal was shining; there was only one lame boy and a few moments of time to save a train full of human beings.

The boy threw away his crutches, climbed on to his father's truck, and worked it steadily back towards the great city.

What mattered it that he steered straight into the jaws of death? He should stop the train; he would make the driver see him and learn the danger ahead.

It was all as Carl knew it would be. Round the curve of the mountain, like a glittering serpent, came the night train speeding on—ever nearer, nearer, till the line trembled under its weight.

Then Carl stood up as well as he was able on his truck, and raised the red light wildly above his head, waving it backwards and forwards to attract the attention of the engine-driver. He had lost all sense of personal danger; he was only bent on saving the train.