

The Old Year.

April's year has gone,
With swift and noiseless tread,
Winter and spring have glided on,
Summer and autumn sped—
Each season with its joy and pain,
And they will never come again.

I mourn its wasted time;
If I could live it o'er,
Its and mistakes I'd try to shun,
Its wrongs would do no more
But, no; the loss would be repair,
'Tis gone for ever, the old year

This only can I do:
Be sorry for the past,
And at my loving Saviour's feet
My weary burden cast.
He will blot out with a crimson stain,
And strengthen me to try again.

Add as a bright new year
Comes with its hope and joy,
I'll seek to live aright, and all
My hours for God employ;
And this new year will try to live
That it a record fair may give.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, JANUARY 6 1904.

NEW SERIES OF PLEASANT HOURS.

It will be remembered that the capacity of PLEASANT HOURS during the past year has been considerably enlarged, so that it printed much more than previously. We make with this number a still further enlargement of its capacity by substituting the new and smaller type and by printing the serial story in smaller type. We hope to be able also to enlarge the size of the paper, but for the present are unable to do so. The economy of space already secured, however, will be really equivalent to a very substantial enlargement of the paper.

NEW BOOK ON CHINESE MISSIONS.

For nearly a year the Editor of this paper has employed most of his limited leisure in compiling a book of popular interest on China and its people, with special reference to Chinese Missions. The following titles from its table of contents will indicate somewhat the range and scope of the volume: Extent, Population, Antiquity, Peculiar Civilization, Social Classes, Language, Religions, Ancestor Worship, Science of Luck, Social Organization, Agriculture, Diet and Social Customs, Marriages and Funerals, The Opium Vice, Gambling, The Quaker, The Feast of Lanterns, Kite Day, Woman in China, Education, Medicine, Modes of Travel, Itinerant Traders, Early Missions in China, Protestant Missions, Mission Methods, A Native Ministry, Wesleyan Missions, Meth. Episcop. Missions, Missions of the M. E. Church South, Missions of the Canadian Methodist Church.

Under this latter head are given: Journey from Shanghai, The "City of Delights," A Sad Bereavement, Missionary Progress, The Chen tu Mission, Letters from Our Missionaries, Other Missions in China, Progress of Christianity in China, Problem of Methodism in China, The Missionary Outlook, Dr. Hart's Travels in China, The Great Wall, etc.

The book contains also an illustrated account of the chief Chinese cities and objects of interest in China. It contains 304 pages, with nearly one hundred engravings. It gives special prominence to the missions of our own Church in China. It should, we think be in every Sunday school and League library. It exhibits the condensed essence of many books of travel and the latest information derived from best authorities up to the year 1893. It will increase the acquaintance of its readers with the world's most important mission field and deepen their interest in the efforts the Methodist Church of Canada is making to supply its needs. It will be especially useful to Mission Bands, Circles, and members of the Woman's Missionary Society. Will be a good holiday present.

Ministers and others will find this book full of information on China and its missions, especially the missions of our Church; to which very special prominence is given. On account of the expensive nature of this book the Editor has assumed the cost of having plates made, and cannot therefore furnish the book through the regular trade channels. Please address all orders to the Rev. Dr. Withrow, Methodist Publishing House, Toronto.

WINE OF THE BIBLE.

"BILL, yo may argify all day, and yo can't git them words out o' the Bible where it says 'wine that maketh glad the heart of man,' and 'give strong drink to the heavy-hearted,' and 'use a little wine fer yer stomach's sake, and 'give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and more of the same kind, which I'd find fer yo if I wasn't in such a hurry to git that hay in from the south medder."

That evening the weekly paper arrived, and Bill otherwise William H. Newberry, aged twenty-two, graduate of the State Normal school, son of Farmer Newberry, studying to fit himself for teaching, came upon a notice of a lecture by a woman, entitled, "The Bible on Wine," to be given at the village, four miles distant, a few evenings later. When the time arrived he rode to the village on horseback, provided with paper and pencil, and determined to take full notes.

The lecture was just what such lectures are almost sure to be since the women came to the front with their sharp wits and mountains of argument. That is, it was quiet and graceful in delivery, intensely earnest and unanswerable in the positions taken. William was entranced. He learned in one hour more than he could have collected for himself in a week. Being a rapid writer, he noted every main point and many of the details. He also spoke to the lady after the meeting, readily obtaining permission to copy her lists of Bible references, and when he returned home felt that he could do more than "offset" his father's verses.

The next day proved to be rainy, and as the "south medder" was cleared of hay and the other work well in hand, Farmer Newberry was very willing to hear William's account of the lecture. After breakfast and a drop of gin he seated himself in a broad-brimmed rocker on the verandah and said: "Now, Bill, sail in and tell us what she said. Lem me hear how she got over the 'wine fer yer stomach's sake' and about the wine at the wedding."

"The word used in the Bible is *kalon*, and it is the same word that Jesus used when speaking of the tree that brought forth good fruit," said William. "And he never said wine, but always fruit of the vine. But even if we admit that the words—well, admitting that the words used leave the case evenly balanced as to fresh grape juice and intoxicating liquor, the scale is easily turned by asking whether Jesus would be likely to furnish a liquor to make the people drunk instead of a delicious and health-giving beverage, such as he is making in all the grapes as they grow; and I do not think any use would be long in—"

"Bill, that's enough! After this, when I hear of Bible wine, I'll first find out what kind is meant before I think of a lot of drunken, sprawling patriarchs. But how about the other kind of wine, the kind that makes folks drunk—if they take too much, which I don't."

"There's plenty of condemnation for that, as we all know; seventy-one texts against it in the Hebrew Scriptures, five of them requiring total abstinence, terrible denunciations everywhere, and was pronounced upon those who make others drunk, but there was not time to consider both sides in one lecture.

And then, the principal reason these women have for looking up this question is to show that the word wine, when used with bread for communion, does not necessarily mean intoxicating liquor."

"Look a-here, Bill, do they use regular liquor in churches?"

"Nearly all churches did use fermented wine until the last few years. Now that the women have taken up the matter, many have abolished it, and the prospect is that very soon nearly all will follow."

"I declare! I never thought before of liquor in the church! Why, they'd be wanting a drink up in heaven! I ain't no church member, but if I wanted to be one I wouldn't go where they'd hold liquor under my nose. Why, if a man should swear off and get a fast in church it might knock his new-year resolutions higher'n a kite."

"Yes, that is precisely what has occurred in many cases, and is what the women are trying to prevent."

"Let 'em do it? And I'd help 'em if I could."

And then he dropped his voice and asked in a hesitating manner, "Bill, d'ye s'pose my takin' a drop now and then, when I don't feel well, or want it for some other reason—d'ye s'pose anybody, that is, d'ye think any one else would be led to—to take more'n he ought to?"

"Well, father, I did not intend to mention the matter, but I did overhear a remark last evening that made me wish your example was on the side of total abstinence. Neighbour Smith whispered to the man at his side that he guessed he could take a little if-ol' Newberry could."

"Did Smith say that? Why, he's half drunk every few days. If he follows my example in drinking, I wonder if he'd follow me if I'd stop. Maybe I could help him, and save his wife and children from a lot of trouble." And with a resounding whack on the arm of his chair, while his voice melted into reverent determination, he exclaimed: "Bill, write out the strongest kind of a pledge and hand it to me. I'll sign it and keep it, and try to save Smith!" —Union Signal.

AN OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER.

THANK God some of us have an old-fashioned mother! Not a woman of the period, whose white, jewelled hands never felt the clasp of baby fingers, but a dear old-fashioned, sweet-voiced mother, with eyes in whose depths the love-light shone, the brown hair, just threaded with silver, lying smoothly upon her faded cheeks; those dear hands, worn with toil, gently guiding out tottering steps in childhood, and soothing out pillow in sickness, ever reaching out to us in yearning tenderness! Blessed is the memory of an old-fashioned mother! It flows to us like the beautiful perfume of some woodland blossom. The music of other voices may be lost, but the clinking memory will echo in our souls forever. Other faces may fade away and be forgotten, but hers will shine on.

When in the beautiful pauses of busy life our feet wander back to the old homestead, and crossing the well-known threshold stand once more in the room, so hallowed by her presence, how the feeling of childhood innocence and dependence comes over us, and we kneel down in the radiant sunshine streaming through the open window—just where long years ago we knelt by our mother's knee, lisping "Our Father!" How many times, when the tempter lured us on, has the memory of those sacred hours, that mother's words, her faith and prayers, saved us from plunging into the abyss of sin! Years have filled great drifts between her and us, but they have not hidden from our sight the glory of her pure unselfish love.

"ADVICE" TO A BOY.

In one of the large railroad offices in this country is a comparatively young man who is at the head of a large department. When he entered the service of the company, five years ago, he was green and awkward. He was given the poorest paid work in the department. The very first day of his employment by the company, a man who had been at work in the same room for six years approached him and gave him a little advice: "Young fellow, I want to put a few words in your ear that will help you. This company is a soulless corporation, that regards its employees as so many machines. It makes no difference how hard you work, or how well. So you want to do just as little as possible and retain your job. That's my advice. This is a slave pen, and the man who works overtime or does any specially fine work wastes his strength. Don't you do it."

The young man thought over the "advice," and after a quiet little struggle with himself he decided to do the best and the most he knew how; whether he received any more pay from the company or not. At the end of the year the company raised his wages, and advanced him to a more responsible position. In three years he was getting a third more salary than when he began, and in five years he was head clerk in the department; and the man who had condescended to give the greenhorn "advice" was working under him at the same figure that represented his salary eleven years before.

This is not a story of a goodly body little boy who died early, but of a five young man who exists to-day and is ready to give "advice" to other young men just beginning to work their way into business. And here it is: "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."—Youth's Companion.

SILENCED BY A PRAYER.

We were a round dozen of the gloomiest passengers that ever got together in a Pullman car one warm June night, coming up from Atlanta over the Piedmont Line. There were several reasons for the early dullness, which deepened as the evening wore on. The weather was clammy and uncomfortable, while to open the windows was to invite a coat of soot and showers of pinners. Moreover, the supper at Charlotte had been undeniably bad.

With such conditions it was not to be wondered at that an air of gloomy moroseness pervaded the car. The only party who did not openly avince any evidence of discontent was a group of a sad-faced man, a woman with a subdued countenance, and a tiny tot of five, apparently the daughter of the man and niece of the lady. We all knew well enough why they were so quiet. In the baggage-car was a rough box, and the little girl clutched tightly a bouquet of the same tuberoses we had seen carried in with the coffin.

By-and-by there were sounds of a slight disturbance from the back part of the car, which caused every one to turn his eyes thither. In the middle of the aisle stood a little fairy form, clad in a snowy night-dress her golden curls shaking over her shoulders by the rocking of the car, while her blue eyes were troubled and half-shut in tears. She was saying in a baby voice, which of passion had caused to rise to its highest pitch, distinguishable above the rattle of the train: "Papa and auntie, I must, mamma told me to before she went to sleep." Securing the attention of the other passengers drawn upon them, the father flushed and made no further remonstrance, and the lady also drew back. The little tot got down reverently upon her knees by the side of the berth, clasped her tiny hands and began:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
and so on until the final "Amen," adding: "God bless papa and auntie and poor little Annie, whose mamma has gone away."
Then, unresisting, they tucked her into the berth. There was no more story telling, no more grumbling, no more grumbling that night. The train pulled on with the sleeping mother in the baggage-car and the sleeping orphan.