

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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HOW PHOEBE GRAY SAVED HER FATHER.

A GREAT many of the islands of the Pacific Ocean owe their existence to the work of a small insect, called the coral insect. Though small in itself, in immense numbers and working together, they possess great power and influence. These coral insects are still working in the Pacific Ocean, each in his tiny cell, and building up stony reefs that become large islands, on which the dew falls, trees grow, and men live.

And little human things—children—have also great power and influence. There is no telling how much may be done by a child.

Let me tell you a story about little Phoebe Gray. She was only five years old. She did not live in a handsome house, nor wear nice clothes, nor have plenty of good food to eat; for I am sorry to tell you that her father was a drunkard.

Now, Phoebe had always been a sweet child, and her tender, loving ways had many times kept her father from taverns and bad company. It seemed to him, sometimes when her arm was about his neck, as if an angel were guarding him. He never spoke crossly to Phoebe, even in his worst fits of drunkenness; and if he got into a rage, as he sometimes did when his poor broken-hearted wife tried to talk with him about his bad habits, his anger died out when the dear child, lifting her tearful eyes and frightened face, would say, "Oh, father! please do not talk so to mother."

Before Phoebe was born, Mr. Gray, when his drunken fits were on him, was very cross at home, and stormed about some times like a madman. But after Phoebe was born, these fits were less frequent, and rarely so violent as in former times.

He loved to hold her in his arms, and would often stay at home in the evening, after she grew to be a few months old, just for the pleasure of carrying her about, or rocking her to sleep in the cradle, instead of his going off to a public-house. It was wonderful to see what power this little tender thing had over a strong man who had become the slave of a maddening vice.

As Phoebe grew, her influence over

her father increased. She had so many winning ways, was so sweet, and gentle, and loving, that her presence always softened him, and made him wish that he were a better man. It was in the gentle sweetness of Phoebe's character, in her forgetfulness of herself and love for her father, that her power lay.

would have abandoned himself wholly to drink. The fiery thirst for liquor had grown so strong that only his love for her put any restraint upon him, and for her sake he often turned back at the very tavern-door, and went home a sober instead of a drunken man.

So it had gone on until Phoebe was

home for want of food and warm clothing.

Still, love did not die in the heart of Phoebe, though she grew thin and pale, and the shadow of a sorrow that was very bitter lay heavily on her young face, that was once so full of light.

Very lonely and sad were all her evenings now. Her father rarely, if ever, came in before nine or ten o'clock, and then he was so stupid with liquor that her only pleasure in seeing him was to know that he was at home instead of in some tavern.

Love is strong and wise. A little girl only five years old is tender and weak; but there may be in her heart such a deep and unselfish love as to make her both wise and strong. It is by love for others that God often works in us and helps us to do good. Phoebe, dear child, did not think of herself when the lonely evenings came and the father she so much loved was away; but she thought of her poor mother, who often sat and cried, and of the harm that might come to her father. Then the wish to do something came into her mind; something to change this dreadful state of things, I mean. *Wishing* soon leads to thinking; and, when *thought* gets busy, it generally finds some way for *doing*.

One night, a storm came up. The wind blew, and the rain fell heavily. A neighbouring clock struck nine; and as the sound died away the wind came with a rushing noise along the street, rattling the shutters and driving the rain upon the windows.

"Oh dear!" said little Phoebe, starting up from the floor, where she had been lying with her head on an old piece of carpet. "I wish father was home."

And then she sat and listened to the dreary wind and rain.

"He'll get so wet, and the wind will blow him about." The poor child knew how weak he was after he had been drinking, and she felt sure he would never be able to stand up against the fierce wind that was blowing.

When this thought came to her mind, fear crept into her heart, and fear began to make pictures of dreadful things. Now she saw, in imagination, her father fall headlong upon the pavement, with no one near to raise him up; now she saw him tumbling into the swollen gutter, and the tide of water rushing



PHOEBE GRAY.

And if her face grew sorrowful sometimes, and her sweet blue eyes filled with tears at the sight of her father as he came staggering home, the change did not make him angry, it half-sobered him with the pain he felt at the grief of his little one.

But for this child Phoebe, Mr. Gray

five years old. But for her sweet influence all would have been lost. Now, long indulgence in drinking had made his fiery thirst so strong that even Phoebe's influence failed to keep him away from the public-house, where he spent nearly all his money, and left his wife and child to suffer at