

A Little Visitor.

BY HELEN STANDISH PERKINS.

There's a busy little fellow,
Who came to town last night,
When all the world was fast asleep,
The children's eyes shut tight.
I cannot tell you how he came,
For well the secret's hid;
But I think upon a moonbeam bright,
Way down the earth he slid.

He brought the Muses' Maple
Each a lovely party gown;
It was a brilliant red and yellow,
With a dash or two of brown.
And he must have had a Midas touch,
For, if the truth is told
The birches all, from top to toe,
He dressed in cloth of gold.

Then he took a glittering icicle,
From underneath the eaves,
And with it, on my window,
Drew such shining silver leaves,
Such fair and stately palaces,
Such towers and temples grand,
Their like I'm sure was never seen
Outside of Fairyland.

Who is this busy little man,
Whose coming brings us joy?
For I'm very sure he's welcomed
By every girl and boy.
The little stars all saw him,
Though they will not tell a soul;
But I've heard his calling card reads
thus:
J. Frost, Esq., North Pole.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, OCTOBER 16, 1897.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

OCTOBER 24, 1897.

David's festival service.—1 Chron. 16. 7-26.

DAVID.

David never forgot the obligations under which he was laid to God. His career had been most marvellous. Think of his humble origin, a shepherd's boy, and yet he became the king of Israel. Too many, when they are elevated in the scale of society, forget themselves and become proud and arrogant. Let all our Epworth Leaguers guard against this danger. Never forget the wise man's saying: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

DAVID AS A RULER.

Though he had the affairs of the nation resting upon him, he was always especially anxious concerning the duty of himself and the people toward God. He always sought to impress them with the thought of their accountability to the God of the universe. The worship of the sanctuary he always remembered. He was anxious that as a nation they should fear God and work righteousness. What an advantage it is to a people when their rulers, both by precept and example, are God-fearing men, and study the best interests of those over whom they are placed in authority. The people of the British Empire have been favoured in this respect far more than many, and they may well sing with

heart and voice, "God save the Queen." For sixty years Victoria has been our ruler, and she has not been a tyrant or an oppressor of her people.

THE ARK OF GOD.

Verso 1. The ark of God was a small chest, about 33 inches broad and high, and 66 inches long. The sides and the lid were all covered with gold. A rim of gold also went round it. The rings by which it was carried were also gold, while at each end there were figures of the cherubim, whose wings spread over the top and met in the middle. It was a beautiful object to look upon. It contained a golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tables which contained the ten commandments. It was always carried by the priests in their marches, and was always conspicuous in the camp. It afterwards had a place in the tabernacle, and then in the temple. It was the symbol of the Divine presence.

DAVID'S ESTEEM FOR THE ARK.

The ark of the covenant had been taken in the time of war by the Philistines, and now, when David was well settled on the throne, he desired to have the ark brought to Jerusalem. The occasion was a memorable one. A church dedication comes nearest to resembling the service here described. David made great preparation for the event, as you may see in the closing portion of the previous chapter. He composed this hymn of praise to be sung on the occasion. It would be impossible to read the whole lesson without being filled with admiration for the spirit by which he is animated.

THE LESSON.

Our worship should largely consist of praise. Singing is an important part of praise. Great attention is paid at the present day to the cultivation of music, but much of the music, even in the sanctuary, is artistic, rather than praise. Choirs and musical instruments should be helps, whereas they are often substitutes. We should have our hearts in tune to praise God, both for temporal and spiritual blessings, individual mercies and national mercies. Let our lives be lives of praise.

"ALMOST FELL."

"Mother I almost fell to-day."
"What do you mean, my son?" asked the weary, careworn mother.

"Why, I did. I almost fell into an awful sin. I was almost dishonest," and the childish voice was lowered, and the face flushed with shame.

"Thank God, you resisted, my child. Tell me all about it."

"Well, mother, you know that I sell papers at the depot every morning, and there is one very pleasant, kind gentleman who buys a paper of me most every morning and always speaks so pleasant. He always seems to have lots of money in his pocket, and takes out a handful of change. Several times he has only had nickels, no pennies, and has told me to keep the extra three cents for myself. One morning he had nothing but two quarters and two silver dollars. He handed me one of the quarters and said, in his pleasant way, 'Got any change, my boy?' I looked, but did not have enough; so he said, 'Never mind; you remember it to-morrow.' The next day was Sunday; and Monday, to-day, you know, I was standing outside the depot and I saw him coming. I thought to myself, 'He will never remember the twenty-three cents that I owe him if he don't see me, and I do want it so much; I will just hide till he has gone.' So I went across the street. I somehow could not hold my head up as I usually do, and I went into a blacksmith shop and peeped out of a crack. I saw him looking as if for some one, and then he said: 'Where is the paper boy this morning? I will have to buy a paper of the boy on the train. Poor little fellow! I hope that he ain't sick. He looks delicate.' Oh, mother, you don't know how his kind words cut me, and how ashamed I felt. I had felt ashamed before; but after that I felt that that money was stolen—that I, your Tommy, was a thief. I rushed across the street, and he was still talking to a gentleman, but I pulled him by the sleeve and gave him the change. He said: 'That is right. I am glad that you are an honest boy.' I felt my face getting red. I felt as if he must read how wicked I had been in my thoughts, and how I meant to cheat him."

The mother's eyes filled with tears as she folded her boy in her arms and kissed him. "Thank God! I have still an honest boy to kiss, Tommy," said she. "Let it be a lesson to you, and the shame that you felt at the dishonest thoughts ever stay in your memory and

keep you from falling, or even almost falling, again. 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.' Our dear Lord said those words to his disciples just before he was crucified. He knew just how weak we all are, and only by praying to him for strength can we conquer. In time of temptation pray for your heart, 'Jesus, help me,' and he will always hear and answer."

NAPOLEON AS A SCHOOLBOY.

Professor Sloane, in his life of Napoleon Bonaparte, devotes an interesting chapter to an account of Bonaparte's life at the military academy of Brienne. He entered the school at the age of ten, and left it at fifteen. His comrades were young sprigs of nobility; in fact, all candidates for admission were required to furnish proof of noble descent—a condition which, in the case of Bonaparte, caused some little trouble. "Money and polished manners were the things most needed to secure kind treatment for an entering boy. These were exactly what the young foundation scholar from Corsica did not possess." He spoke French badly, with an abominable accent, and he could not stand chaff. He became a gloomy and solitary Ishmael, continually quarrelling with the other boys, and sometimes, when goaded beyond endurance, turning on them "in a kind of frenzy," and inflicting serious wounds. Once, on being taunted with his lack of any ancestry worth naming, he challenged his tormentor to fight a duel. His punishment by the school authorities eventually gave him a kind of prestige with his comrades, and he became a recognized leader in their games. The Royal Inspector, who visited the school in 1763, reported on him thus:

"M. de Bonaparte (Napoleon), born August 15, 1769. Height, five feet three inches. Excellent health, docile disposition, mild, straightforward, thoughtful. Conduct most satisfactory; has always been distinguished for his application in mathematics. He is fairly well acquainted with history and geography. He is weak in all accomplishments—drawing, dancing, music, and the like. This boy would make an excellent sailor; deserves to be admitted to the school in Paris."

Napoleon's docile disposition and mildness did not, however, impress his preceptors at Brienne. About a year after the report of the Royal Inspector he left the academy with a certificate endorsed as follows: "Character masterful, imperious and headstrong."

It should be remembered that Bonaparte's father naturalized himself as a French subject only about three months before the birth of Napoleon, and that during boyhood and early manhood the latter not only considered himself as a foreigner in France, but regarded that country with positive hatred. He could speak no French whatever until just before he went to Brienne. Less than two years before the capture of Toulon he writes to a Frenchman thus: "If your nation loses courage at this moment, it is done with forever." At about this time he was thinking of taking service under the English in India, where, he said, a career was open to a good officer of artillery. "In a few years I shall return thence a rich nabob," he wrote to his brother. "and bring five dowries for our three sisters." Up to the age of twenty-three he can hardly be said to have had a profession, for he had persistently neglected his military duties, and had tried and failed to secure attention as an author and as a politician. His first success in arms against the insurgent Girondists in 1793 was really the turning point in his career; from that time forward he has done with visionary schemes, and casts in his lot with the armies of France.

ELIZABETH OF AUSTRIA.

Speaking of Elizabeth of Austria, an exchange says: Soon after the marriage of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, she was visiting a barrack, when above the beating of drums in a distant courtyard she heard cries of pain. "What is that?" she asked. "Merely soldiers undergoing the punishment of the whipping-rods," she was told. The young empress' attention was not to be diverted until she had made further inquiries; then she begged of her husband, as a wedding gift, that this barbaric punishment should be abolished.

The new law on military punishment—of January 15th, 1855—shows that Franz Josef yielded to her entreaties. Subsequently she had the chaining of prisoners stopped, and many other hardships of soldiers and prisoners lessened.

As these incidents indicate, she has a tender heart. The story is told of her that because one of the nurses of her little girl, Marie Valerie, was worried about her parents and little children, from whom she was separated, the empress took a long ride twice a week for some months to visit the nurse's family, and bring the good woman news of them.

Another pretty story of Elizabeth is that one day she was walking in the beautiful Miramar gardens, when a heavy shower came up. She took refuge in a grotto. Presently a little girl came running in, breathless from her race to escape a wetting. She and the empress exchanged a few words. It rained harder and harder. The child was much distressed; she had been told to do an errand at the chateau, or her way home from school, and then to come straight home. She was sure to receive a scolding if she stayed any longer.

What was to be done? The empress bravely picked up her skirts, took the little girl by the hand, and walked home with her. It was no small thing to do, for the child's home was at some distance, and it was still raining. The little girl escaped a scolding, and it was not until some time later that she knew who her beautiful protector was.

Elizabeth's beauty is almost classic in its style. Her grand appearance and manner betrayed her in one of her early attempts to travel incognito. Of late years she has travelled a great deal under the name of Countess Hohenembs. As she dresses simply and usually has but one attendant with her, she often passes unnoticed.

THE STORY OF THE ACORN.

BY ELIZABETH DAVIS FIELDER.

When mamma went to the basket to find something for the bedtime talk, it was filled to the brim with—nothing but acorns.

"Tell us all about them," Jack said. "We picked them up under the big tree in the corner of the yard. Ellen says that they are good for nothing but to feed pigs."

"I suppose they are good for pigs," mamma said; "but the story of the acorn's life is so beautiful that it really seems like 'casting pearls before swine.' Did you know that inside the smooth, hard shell is a tiny tree?"

"Why, mamma!" Jack interrupted; "I bit one to see if it tasted like a chestnut, and there was nothing but a white kernel, that was very bitter."

"I know," mamma answered; "you cannot see the tree, but it is there. The little brown nut must be buried in the earth for a long time, down where it is damp and dark. The rain must fall on it, and the snows cover it, and the sun shine on it for many days. It takes a great deal of patience for a little boy to wait for it, but by-and-by, when the winter snows are gone, and the earth begins to grow warm in the spring sunshine, two small, pale leaves peep timidly out of the ground. They are very tender and shy at first; but they soon grow stronger and bolder, and lift their heads a little higher above the ground, and other leaves appear to keep these company. The stem which holds them grows firm, and the leaves take on a deeper, richer green. It is a twig now, reaching toward the sunlight, stretching itself upward and longing for the time when it will be a tree in which birds can build their nests and sing their songs all day long. After a while the frosts come, and the little twig, which has been trying so hard all the summer to grow and be something, is touched. The leaves turn yellow, then brown, and soon a chill gust of November wind sweeps them off and whirls them away. It seems that the twig had all its trouble for nothing, for now it appears to be but a lifeless thing. There it stands all winter, beaten by storms, covered with snow and ice, and one would think that it could never be warm with life again. But the south winds blow once more. The little twig feels a strange thrill run all along its slender body. The sap is rising, life is returning, and soon the leaves will come again. The twig will send out other branches. It will reach higher and higher toward the light, and after many summers of growing and many winters of resting the twig will find one day that it has become a tree. It tosses its branches proudly toward the sky and waits without fear for the winter, because it has grown very wise now, and knows that it is only for a little while. It can sleep patiently through the dark, cold days, wrapped in its garment of snow and ice, dreaming of returning birds and opening flowers in the spring time that is near at hand."