

UNCLE TOM'S DEPARTMENT.

MY DEAR NEPHEWS AND NIECES,—

I am growing quite proud of our Puzzle Corner, which I watch with as much interest as when I had full care of it. How clever my boys and girls are! I should not be surprised to see some of them bud out into poets some fine day—what say you? I regret that we cannot have more space for our department [Uncle Tom still claims the Puzzle column as his], but if we trespass the editor grumbles politely, and—well, what can a poor fellow do but try to be content with less? Endeavor to send shorter puzzles (conciseness is laudable in almost everything), and fewer large “form” puzzles, such as “cabin,” “hourglass,” and large “diagonals,” as the answers, as well as the puzzles, occupy considerable space.

One of the principal aims of the conscientious teacher of to-day is to encourage his pupils to think for themselves, to reason things out, rather than commit them to memory—thank fortune the methods are better than when your uncle was a boy. Many of my nephews and nieces are past school age; several who are still young are unable to attend school; for them the amusement of puzzling is very beneficial, as it strengthens the reasoning faculties and supplies (at least in a small measure) the mental discipline of study, while it cannot fail to be entertaining.

Our readers' love of good literature has been amply exemplified by the large numbers who took

Now, if any of you know a good joke, give the public the benefit of it, and when May 15th ADVOCATE comes, we'll all laugh together, and what a glorious chorus will resound all over Canada.

Your loving—UNCLE TOM.

“Homeward Bound.”

What a world of meaning lies in these two words! Those who have been at sea can doubly understand all they convey. Of course, in these days of rapid transit and wealth there are many who think no more of a trip across the ocean than a run to Montreal, New York, or Chicago, but these people do not seem to belong to the same category. “Homeward Bound” or outward bound is much the same to them—it is simply a “trip.” These ocean liners are little worlds for the time being, and hold many a romance and tragedy. Many a “match” has been made on board—for people are thrown so much more together socially than when on land—unless they are *stand-offish*. One seems somehow to have a common interest in the surroundings and in each other.

Sometimes “Homeward Bound” has a deeper meaning: When some poor soul dies on the voyage, and the vessel is stopped for a time, a solemn hush prevails, and the one who is already gone in spirit is lowered into God's boundless sea—then the great engines revolve, and the good ship goes on her way—ah! but this is a solemn time!

Well, we must take the sadness and the joy as it comes, and try to picture those on board and those waiting for them at home.

Agriculture in the Bible and Bible Times.

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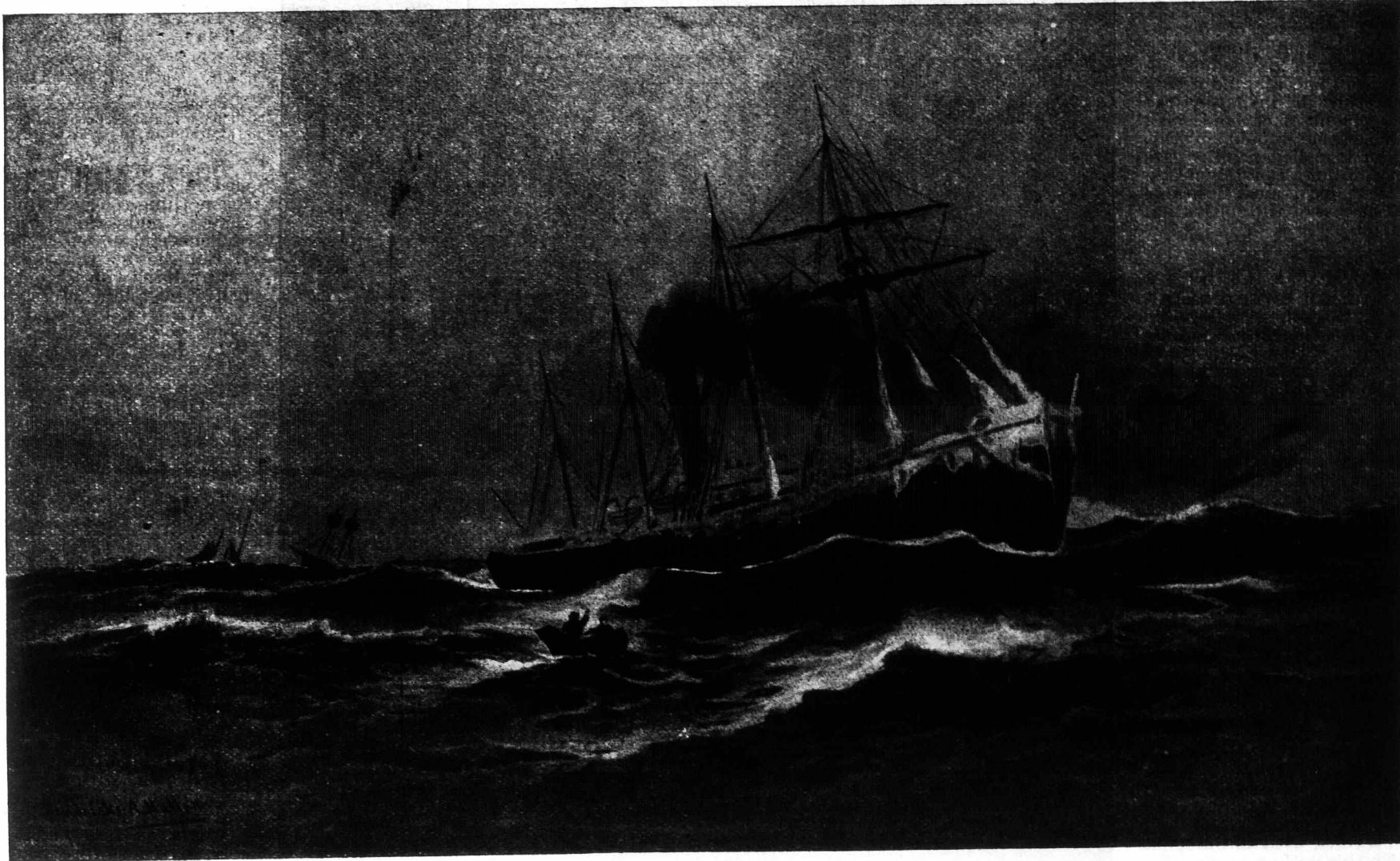
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“The making of the fields.”

“The dry land” having now been formed, the time had come for the creation of plants for which it was suited. The Bible story is very brief: “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass,” etc.—Gen. I.; 11-12. Now, we must not suppose this wonderful passage simply means that in a very short period the Creator made and left the surface of the earth just as we see it to-day. It simply tells us that one after another the various forms of plant life have taken their place on the earth, some to exist but a comparatively short time, yet each alike helping to clothe the earth, and fulfilling its mission in preparing the way for other plants by its own decay and death.

They have not only in this way prepared vast areas of rich vegetable loam, which is composed of the remains of generations of dead plants, but in the earlier ages of the world's life they even assisted in the formation of certain parts of the rocks which form the earth's crust. They flourished, then, dying, contributed each their quota to the rocks being built up largely out of animal and vegetable life.

Geology shows many remains of the earliest



“HOMEWARD BOUND”

part in the contests held during the past year, and before the long evenings leave us and the busy spring work commences I should like to have another competition different from any of the others.

Many doctors assert, and I concur with them, that laughter is good for digestion; and most people will admit that good digestion constitutes a great part of our worldly happiness (fancy a happy dyspeptic!); therefore it is expedient for us to try to promote it by all the means in our power. If laughter be an aid to that end, why, let us laugh. Some of those learned fellows will probably claim to have made this discovery; but Solomon proclaimed ages ago that “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine,” and I'm sure it is infinitely more agreeable. The contest I am about to announce has for its object the treating of our readers to a good hearty laugh.

We offer three cloth-bound books for the three best collections of amusing anecdotes, witticisms, or humorous tid-bits; each collection to contain three items, none of which contain more than two hundred and fifty words. Write with pen and ink, on one side *only* of the paper, and address “Uncle Tom,” FARMER'S ADVOCATE, London, Ont. All papers should be signed plainly with the sender's name, which will not be published if the writer does not wish it, and will send a *nom de plume*. The work must be in this office not later than April 15, and the result will appear in the ADVOCATE of May 15th. Articles which have already appeared in the ADVOCATE are not desired.

This liner seems to have had a pretty rough time, judging by the ice which clings to the rigging. In that small boat must be the pilot, apparently waving a good-bye, or signalling that he is ready to come aboard, and in the distance we see the pilot cutter with its two big globes aloft—easily seen by day and at night lighted up. There is always something invigorating in these shipping scenes, with the dancing waves and the bounding vessel, and one seems touched by a breeze from the sea—a touch which teaches how much “Homeward Bound” can mean.

Is it You?

There is a child—a boy or girl,
I'm sorry it is true—
Who doesn't mind when spoken to;
Is it you?—it can't be you!

I know a child—a boy or girl,
I'm loth to say I do—
Who struck a little playmate child;
I hope that wasn't you.

I know a child—a boy or girl,
I hope that such are few—
Who told a lie—yes, told a lie!
It cannot be 'twas you!

There is a boy—I know a boy,
I cannot love him, though—
Who robs the little birdie's nest;
That bad boy can't be you!

A girl there is—a girl I know—
And I could love her, too,
But that she is so proud and vain;
That surely isn't you!

types of plants imbedded in and turned to rock. The oldest forms were seaweeds, ferns, horsetails, clubmosses, and a species of cone-bearing tree.

In what is known as the Devonian series of rocks, further advance has been made. Trees more like our own are found, petrified of course, but so wonderfully preserved that their character can be determined. So, gradually, there came into existence representatives of the various great divisions of plants as we now have them, just as the Bible states. Vast forests covered many parts, and these at length formed enormous deposits of vegetable matter, which, under the action of water and finally tremendous pressure, became the precious coal beds which are of such inestimable value to us now.

It is interesting to note the order in which the different classes of plants are placed in the Scripture narrative. First “the *tender grass*,” then “herb yielding seed,” next “the tree yielding fruit.”

This is just what we should expect to find written, for it accords fully with what may still be observed.

Suppose we could watch the process of clothing with vegetation some coral island or naked rock, what should we see?

First would be seen a thin coating of *lichen* clothing the rock as with a garment of many colors, red, yellow and gray mixed in wondrous harmony. These tiny plants, to be seen on every hand on hard rock, stained fence or weather-beaten tree, pave the way for a succeeding race of mosses, which live and grow upon the vegetable matter provided by the decaying lichen.