

The Two Grandmothers.

BY MARY A. DENIKON

"Be happy while you can, my child,"
Said Grandma Dolorous;
"Expect your crosses every year,
Just as they came to us,
The road of life goes down, my child;
'Tis thorny, rough, and steep,
And at the end are troubles wild,
Then just a dreamless sleep."

"Be happy all the time, my dear,
And live your cross above."
So chatted Grandma Great-to-Cheer,
Grown old in Jesus' love,
"The path of life goes up, my dear,
Though rough, a glorious road,
And at the end are hope and cheer,
And life and joy and God!"

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 11, 1897.

"THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL."

BY REV. SAMUEL GREGORY.

"Seek, and ye shall find"—Matt. 7. 7.

KING ARTHUR'S ROUND TABLE.

If you ever go to that part of Cornwall where the sea cliffs are grandest, you will see a grey old ruin, called "King Arthur's Castle," for it is said that old British king lived there in the West country.

King Arthur had a band of knights who sat at a round table. There could therefore be no "head" of the table and no "end" of the table. The table was "round," to signify that all were equals and brothers.

THE FABLE OF "THE HOLY GRAIL."

Hence the band of knights was called "The Round Table," as we call a band of gentlemen "a School Board," because they sit at a "board" (or table) to do their work. Some very curious stories about these knights of King Arthur are found in old English books, and Tennyson has put them into his poems—The Idylls of the King.

The best known of these stories is that of "The Holy Grail." In that old time people said that after Jesus had partaken of the Last Supper the "cup" out of which he drank was kept by Joseph of Arimathea. Somehow the "cup" came to England. It was a holy and wonderful thing and did great miracles. But men grew wicked, and because of their wickedness the "cup" or "grail," as it was called, became invisible. It was lost. So King Arthur's knights thought that the noblest thing they could do was to seek this invisible treasure. They went here and there searching for "The Holy Grail."

OYSTERS—BEES—BUTTERFLIES.

Of course there never was any "Holy Grail" to find. It is a fairy tale, and it means that there are holy things which you cannot see with your eyes. To wicked people holy things are invisible. It is the business of life to seek these things. We are born to seek. An oyster lies still at the bottom of the sea, and never moves about to seek for anything. If the oyster moves it is when the sea moves it. But God has given us brains, and eyes, and feet, and

has said: "Seek, and ye shall find." So most people are either "bees" or "butterflies," going about looking for one thing or another. Some are seeking knowledge. They thirst to know what is to be known, as in summer days you thirst for water. Some are seeking fame. They want their names to be known and remembered as we remember the names of Alexander the Great and the Duke of Wellington. Some are seeking gold. They want to have a great deal of money, and to rejoice in having more than other people. Some are seeking pleasure, and are like butterflies in the garden, going to flower after flower, and staying nowhere for more than a moment, as if they never could find the one flower they are looking for.

If you stand on London Bridge, or by the Bank of England, you see streams of people hurrying past, looking straight before them, and all apparently off after something. Everybody is in quest of one thing or another. We are born to seek as certainly as Columbus was born to be a seeker.

THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW.

Jesus Christ came down from heaven to show us what to seek, and to guide us in our search. After all that search which King Arthur's knights made for "The Holy Grail," was a foolish adventure. It was as foolish as that of the boy who tried to get to the spot where the rainbow rests on the ground. No one ever could get to the foot of the rainbow, because the rainbow would go farther off as fast as anyone moved towards it. People used to say: "If you get to the foot of the rainbow you will find a bag of gold!" So you will "if" you get to the foot of that splendid bridge in the clouds. But you never can get there. Many people seek what they can never find, or seek wrong things, or seek right things in a wrong way. We are like ancient mariners, who needed a star fixed in heaven to guide them. And Jesus is our Guide to the invisible treasures of life.

HOODED FALCONS.

Old English people used to say that it was only good people who could even see "The Holy Grail." Bad people cannot see what is good for them. Boys and girls take wrong ways, and spoil their lives, through not seeking properly—they are blind, not as people whom you sometimes see groping along the streets are blind. The poor blind man cannot help being in the dark. He would see if he could. But wilful and foolish people are blind because they will not see. No father or mother, no teacher or book, can make them see how they ought to live. To shut your eyes that is a poor way to begin to seek for anything. In days when people hunted game with tame hawks or falcons a hood was sometimes put on the head of the hawks to blindfold them. And often people live as if sin had put a dark hood over their minds, so that they miss seeing what real good there is to live for.

WHAT TO SEEK.

What we have to seek is not the cup out of which Christ drank, but Christ himself.

He came down from heaven to teach us, to die for us, and to make us good. Indeed he is still on earth. With our eyes we do not see him, but something in our hearts often shows him to us, and we seem to hear his voice. He wants us to live like he lived. He lived to love God, to do good, to help people, to save men and women from sin, and to be a guide to happiness and usefulness. One of the New Testament writers calls life a race, and says we are to lay our sins aside (as a racer does his coat), and run our race with patience, looking unto Jesus. It is Jesus we are to seek. We must be his friends. We must serve him. We must live so that he will call us his faithful soldiers. When he says, "Seek," it is himself he wants us to find.

HOW TO FIND.

The way in which King Arthur's knights sought "The Holy Grail," helps us to see how we are to seek Jesus. There are four things which mark the true seekers:

1. One is reverence. Do not laugh at those old British knights though they were so mistaken. It seemed to them beautiful to go after sacred things. Do try to keep holy things in mind. If you saw King Arthur's castle, and the great deep cliffs, and the sea with its big Atlantic waves, green as an apple, and with foam as white as snow, you would say, "This is sublime!" and a deep spirit of awe would fill you. Now God is greater and grander than the sea, or than any of the wonderful things he has made. Cherish holy thoughts, and do not be flippant and irreverent.

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared!" Charles Lamb once said: "If Jesus suddenly appeared in this room, we should all kneel to him." He is always near us, though he does not appear, so let our thoughts adore him.

2. Then the old knights prayed as they went on their search. Praying is talking to Jesus as you talk to mother and father about things you want. If you look what comes before the word "seek" you will see it is the word "ask."—"Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." Every day we ask God to guide us and help us, we shall not seek foolish things but good things, and we shall not seek in vain.

3. Those old knights who sought the "Grail" put on courage. In dark lonely forests where lions roared at them they drew their swords, and steeled their hearts against fear. They believed that when people are trying to serve God, God will take care of his people. We all need to be very brave. Never mind who laughs at us or what hinders us, let us not give up or be afraid. Jesus says of all who love him: "I am always with you!" If we go along with Jesus he can defend us in all places.

4. But King Arthur's knights above all believed that it was only the pure who could ever find the precious treasure. One of the knights (Lancelot) failed because he sinned, and the knight who succeeded in his quest was Galahad, because he tried to keep his mind white as newly fallen snow. Jesus has said that the pure in heart are the happy people who see God in everything, and St. Paul once said to a young man: "Flee youthful lusts that war against the soul!"

WHITE AS SNOW.

In a morning when snow has fallen, and the white ground and roofs and trees make a fairy scene, we say how pure snow is. But in a very little while it becomes dark and dirty. The atmosphere is full of smoke and soot which settle on the snow and sully its whiteness. It is like that with our hearts. Defiling things settle on us, and we feel that we are not good and pure. Let us ask God to cleanse us. Long ago a man was praying, and he said: "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow!" That ought to be our prayer to Jesus, and if a sincere prayer he will hear it. Just as the knight who was impure could not find the mysterious and wonderful treasure, we cannot find the prize of life unless we are good, but Jesus will give to us, if we ask him, the divine Spirit of all goodness. Ask, and ye shall receive—then seek, and ye shall find.

WORK BEGINS.

Vacation is over. The tennis balls and racquets are put away, the row-boat is in its house, the pony is in the pasture, the long walks are over. Work begins.

You are going back to school or college. Perhaps you are inclined to take up your school-books with a sigh.

"The whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school."

The world recognizes the accuracy of Shakespeare's portrait, and this autumn the streets will be full of such boys and girls, reluctantly turning their backs on their summer sports and toward their winter tasks. Nor should the mother think that there is any harm in that unwillingness. A healthy boy should like sports better than study. What colt chooses the harness? The more spirit, the less inclination to the hush of the school-room and the droning over dog-eared school-books. And yet, sir, you who go unwillingly to school, would you really choose to be quit of your school tasks? There are hundreds of boys in our great cities for whom there is no room in the schools, and who have been taken away this autumn from their half-conned books. Some of them have gone with heavy hearts and tears in their eyes to the workshop. Would you change places with them? In spite of your snail-like pace, are you not, deep down in your heart, glad that you are among the number who can go to school?

Perhaps, however, your early school-days are over, and you are starting for college or for a higher school away from home. You begin to feel the symptoms of home-sickness. There is in that no harm. If a boy or girl going away from home for the first time feels no home-sickness, there is something wrong, either about him or his home. New life brings with it new experiences, and new experiences new burdens and sorrows. But it also brings new exhilarations and

joys. Would you be willing to give up the deeper and broader life which your school life has already given you? or the friendships which it has brought you? But your new experiences will bring you to still deeper springs of intellectual life, and will introduce you to friendships more sacred than any yet enjoyed. Look forward, and erase the old regrets by new hopes.

But perhaps you are not going back to school nor forward to college, but to business: If you could go back to books and studies, you would rejoice; but no such good fortune awaits you. You are going from your summer vacation to the dull routine of a book-keeper's desk, or the more irritating variety of a salesman's place behind the counter, or to the monotonous din of a factory, or to the prosy precedents of a lawyer's office, or to the scenes of suffering and distress which wear the nerves and drain the life of a physician. Certainly it is hard to abandon the freedom of the mountains for the confinement of the counting-room, the fresh air of the ocean, for the vile odours of a down-town street, the music of birds for the rattle of the elevated train, and the quiet beauty of a meadow for the noisy and dirty squares of a great city. But if your work sometimes seems odious to you, consider how much more odious to be without work; to tramp the streets day after day seeking for it, to apply over and over again only to be repulsed, to search the papers for advertisements, only to find ten persons seeking employment to one employment seeking a person, to come home night after night with the repetition of the same unwelcome tidings, Nothing yet. How welcome to you, then, would be the high stool in the counting-room, or long line of irritating shoppers, or the musty air of the ill-lighted office! Work begins!—an elocutionist could put into those two words an experience of invincible distaste, or an exuberance of triumphant joyousness. And you, dear reader, can make it mean either, at will.

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PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

SEPTEMBER 19, 1897.

A call to praise.—Psalm 96. 1-6.

A NEW SONG.

The Christian's life should be a life of praise. New events are new reasons for ascribing praise and adoration to God. The Psalmist wants others to join him in praising God. He cannot praise as he wishes to do, and therefore he calls for help. The whole nation should praise God, for he blesses nations as well as individuals. Every new condition or situation of life should be a cause for praise.

THE HEATHEN.

Verse 3. This might be regarded as a command to send the Gospel to the heathen. The heathen have not the knowledge of the Gospel. It is the duty of those who have the Gospel to send it abroad. The attributes of the Deity are here set forth, and his superiority to idols clearly manifest. He made the heavens. Idol gods can do nothing.

OBJECT OF WORSHIP.

Verse 6. The sublime is always attractive. It is nowhere to be found as in God himself. Real beauty is to be seen in all its attractiveness in him. Such moral beauty only belongs to God. The earth is his footstool, and even it is full of beauty, but if the footstool be so glorious, what must he be who fills heaven and earth with his glory. A proper view of the Godhead will prompt to constant gratitude.

REVIEW.

The lesson began with a call to praise. Every verse is full of overflowing with louder and more earnest appeals for praise to be rendered to him, who has crowned our lives with his goodness. Every day should call forth a fresh song of praise. If we will look at every-day occurrences we will be overwhelmed with a sense of Jehovah's goodness, and be led to exclaim, What shall I render to God for all his goodness towards me. Our song should be,

"Birds of the air exalt thy fame,
And shall I silent be?
No, Lord, thy goodness I'll proclaim,
And give my heart to thee."
Praise him continually. There is nothing we so much neglect as praising God.

There is no gleam of glory gone
For those who read in Nature's book,
No lack of triumph in their look
Who stand in her eternal dawn.