

received some encouragement. Soon after a school was organized, and word reached the Mission Rooms that large numbers were attending the religious services held by Mr. Vrooman, and that it was important they should be continued, but it was doubtful if he could remain much longer. Instructions were immediately sent to engage Mr. Vrooman for the time being, until some one else, able to speak the language, could be found. This was done and Mr. Vrooman preached the Gospel to the people several years.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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

TORONTO, MARCH 19, 1898.

THE PEARL MERCHANT.

BY REV. SAMUEL GREGORY.

One pearl of great price. Matt. 13. 45.

Men do not make pearls, or polish a perfect them. All that men can do is to find pearls or buy them. It is the oysters that make pearls. No oyster has ever told any one the secret of the process, but it seems to be in this way: An oyster lies in his bed with his mouth open. A grain of sand floats into his mouth. Of course the oyster is annoyed, but as he cannot get rid of the troublesome grain of sand, he sets to work to cover it with a pearl. Who would think that an oyster had so much sense, for "making the best of things"?

PEARL DIVERS.

The finest pearl-makers are oysters lying at the bottom of the sea near Ceylon. In order to procure them a boat goes out to where the oysters are lying. A "diving-stone" is fastened to the end of a long rope. Near the stone there is a loop of cord. A man stands on the stone, slips his foot into the loop, takes a basket with him, draws a long breath, then down he drops with the stone. Sometimes an awful thing happens. The cord shakes, air-bubbles rush to the surface of the water, and when the diving stone is drawn up again the diver has gone. You can guess what has become of the poor fellow. A shark has snapped him up. This is not very common, for sharks are more afraid of divers than divers are of sharks. Sometimes the diver goes down twenty or thirty yards, and is away for sixty or eighty seconds. As soon as he is at the bottom he sets to work in the green twilight down there, raking shell-fishes into his basket, and if all goes well returns with a basket full. Five divers go down on the stones, while five others sit resting, and so they take turns in visiting the pearl-factory at the bottom of the sea. At last a signal is given, and all boats stop fishing and pull ashore. In due time the oysters are searched. Many have nothing in them, others have small "seed-pearls," others pearls of more value, and very rarely "pearls of great price" are discovered. Pearl-fishing is great trouble, involves vast risk, and requires much courage and perseverance. It is the same with the pursuit of all things worth having. That pearl-diver on the stone is a fine example. He shows what resolution

means, and what it is to dive down to the bottom of things, and how necessary it is not to be discouraged by disappointment, and how to keep trying, and trying, and trying, till we win the prize we are striving to obtain.

THE PEARL MERCHANT.

One sunshiny day Jesus was by the sea-side, talking to the people. They gathered round him in such crowds that he stepped into a boat, and asked the fisherman to push out a little way. Then he turned round and faced the people on the sands, and among the things which Jesus said was a story about a pearl merchant. This man kept a Jeweller's shop and was a capital Judge of gems. He trained his eyes, kept a sharp look-out, and went about buying pearls. Sometimes people tried to take him in and pretended that they had gems of great value. But the man looked closely at the pearls offered him, shook his head, and went to the next sailor, to see if he had anything worth looking at. Days and days this merchant spent going from ship to ship, and from bazaar to bazaar. One day he saw a wonder. It was not a very large pearl, for this man was not to be taken in by "big" things. He wanted "precious" things. This pearl then was of purer colour than anything the merchant had ever seen. He tried not to look surprised, and asked the owner what he wanted for his gem. As the merchant had not so much money he tried to get the pearl more cheaply. But the other man knew what a gem he had, and said: "No! I've told you my price, and if I never sell it, it shall not go for a farthing less!" The pearl-seeker said, "I'll think about it!" so off he went, gathered everything he could get together, his house, his shop, his garden, his furniture, had an auction, and "sold all that he had." With the money he bought that pearl. It was a grand stroke of business, and made his fortune.

OUR FRIEND "BUBBLES."

Why did Jesus tell that story of the merchantman seeking goodly pearls? He told it for two reasons. One was to show the value of religion. The salvation of our soul is the pearl of great price. It is beyond everything in preciousness.

Many forget that. It is not every one who knows what is the most precious thing in life. It is wonderful in what foolish ways people pass their time over what comes to nothing at the last. You have seen a picture on the walls, in the streets, and at railway stations. It is the picture of a little curly-headed boy. He is dressed in knickerbockers, sits holding a basin, has just blown a lovely globe of water into the air, and sits watching it float away. Tell me the title of that picture! "Bubbles!" I believe the picture is stuck up to advertise something, and it does advertise the way in which many spend the best years of their life. If Solomon saw that picture he would say: "Wisdom crieth out in the streets." Some people use their life in such a manner that the word "Bubbles" ought to be written under their portraits. A poet who spent his days foolishly, said:

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed,
Or like the snow-flake on the river,
A moment white, then gone forever,
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Vanishing amidst the storm."

It is possible to spend life in such stupid, foolish ways that no pearl of great price is ever found.

A SURPRISE IN A JEWELLER'S SHOP.

Yes, people are often mistaken about precious things. I knew a man who kept a Jeweller's shop. One day a lady came in with a trinket—an old earring, or brooch, or something of that sort. She had kept it for a long time in a box, with some copper twopenny-pieces and an old silver thimble, and thought (as there was a gem in the trinket) the Jeweller might perhaps give her a little money for it. So she said: "Can you give me anything for this?" He looked at it for a minute, and then said: "Yes, I will give you £50 for it, or I will have it valued, and pay you what is fair. The lady was astonished, as she did not expect to receive above a sovereign for the trinket, so she said: "I'll take the £50!" The Jeweller paid that sum, sent the gem to a merchant, and received so much for it that he sent the lady £15 more. Here was one person who did not know the value of a thing, and another person who did know. It is a great thing to know pearls when you have them. Thus God has given us health, and home, and friends. We have the chance of learning at a good school. We have Sunday, and the Book

of God, and many precious things. God gives us such a happy chance in life that "the topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, and no mention shall be made of corals or pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies." It is awful when we have not the sense to know when we are well off, and to be thankful, and to use God's good gifts well. In one of the public exhibitions in Paris there is a strong iron box with a glass front, and in it (for everybody's gaze) is one of the most precious stones in Europe, called "The Star of the East." Day and night soldiers are always standing to guard that precious thing. If we valued time, and a good conscience, and the favour of God, we should always be "on guard" against temptation and danger to the jewel and ornament of our life.

THEATRICAL JEWELLERY.

When Jesus was talking about some girls, he said: "Five of them were wise and five were foolish." Perhaps there are more wise girls in our time, but perhaps it is almost like that; half the girls and boys have not so much sense as they ought to have. And it may be a little like that with grown-up people. They act as people might who mistake a glass bead for a pearl. In London there are what are called "theatrical Jewellers," who make gems for "fairies" to wear in pantomimes. If you walked through the warehouse of one of these "theatrical Jewellers," you would see heaps of "gems" of great size and dazzling lustre, but you would require to see them by gaslight. They will not bear daylight, and a little real pearl is of more value than a hatful of such baubles. In what we call "life" there is a great deal of "theatrical Jewellery," that is why men like John Bunyan call this world "Vanity Fair." Nothing is so important as to have our eyes opened in thoughtfulness to see life rightly, to see it as Jesus saw it.

"One pearl of great price," that is how Jesus describes religion in the soul. To have the forgiveness of our sins, to love God, to have a good conscience, to let God's good Spirit guide us safely in all that is right—that is more precious than any pearl. It is said that the gate of heaven is "one pearl," which means that to so live that we may enter there is above all things in preciousness.

NANSEN'S "FAR-HEST NORTH"

Thus for one thing Jesus wanted to show the value of religion. The other thing he wanted to show is the necessity for resolution. That merchantman was determined to have the pearl. He would have it. He would make any sacrifice, and take any trouble, to obtain the pearl. He said: "I must have it, even if I sell my bed!" I do not know what is to become of you if you cannot make good resolutions and keep them. It is not enough to "wish," and to think you would "like" to do something. What is necessary is to clench your teeth and to say, "I will!" That is why people made so much of Dr. Nansen, because he kept on so in that amazing journey. Year after year, among ice and snow and polar bears, and with his teeth chattering with cold, he persevered among all sorts of horrors, saying: "I will go as far as man can go!" That is why people shouted "Hurrah!" when he came back dirty and tired. We want resolution for everything. Paul said: "I count all things but loss that I may win Christ." That is the spirit to cherish. Jesus would save everybody. He wants to make us all good. He would have all of us useful while we live. We could all be happy if we really tried. For happiness is not like a costly pearl, which rich men only can obtain. Everybody can have it who asks God to guide him, and really goes the right way to look for it. "Seek, and ye shall find; for every one that seeketh findeth."

THE QUEEN'S GRANDFATHER.

Who does not know the "Copper Horse" at Windsor, that equestrian statue at the end of the Long Walk to which (and back again) the local flyman always offers to drive the tourist? The Queen was entertaining a great man, who in the afternoon walked from the castle to Cumberland Lodge. At dinner her Majesty, full, as always, of gracious solicitude for the comfort of her guests, said: "I hope you were not tired by your long walk?" "Oh, not at all, thank you, ma'am. I got a lift as far back as the Copper Horse." "As far as what?" inquired her Majesty, in evident astonishment. "Oh, the Copper Horse, at the end of the Long Walk." "That's not a Copper Horse. That's my grandfather!"—Littell's Living Age.

The Old Tin Sheep.

BY KATHARINE PYLE.

"Creak!" said the old tin sheep on wheels,
"I'm growing old, and down my back
I'm very sure there's a dreadful crack.
There's nobody knows," said the old tin sheep,
"till he's old how an old toy feels."

"I used to trundle about the floor;
But that was when I was young and new;
It's something that now I could not do.
No; I shall quietly rest myself on this shelf behind the door."

"Creak!" said the sheep; "what's gone amiss?
Some one is taking me out, I know.
They're pulling my string, and away I go.
Stop! oh, stop!" cried the old tin sheep,
"I never can go like this!"

But Tommy pulled the sheep around;
About the nursery it went so fast
The floor beneath seemed flying past.
While creakety-creakety-creak! the wheels went round with a doleful sound.

Then Tommy left it there on its side;
The wheels moved slowly and stopped with a creak,
And the wax doll heard it faintly speak:
"There's nobody knows what he can do,"
said the sheep, "till he has tried!"
—St. Nicholas.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

MARCH 27, 1898.

To temperance.—Prov. 20. 1; 23. 29, 30. Ephesians 5. 18.

A SOLEMN STATEMENT.

First text. How true it is that wine is a mocker, etc. It does not give strength. It does not add to a man's reputation, for even those who deal in strong drinks always prefer total abstinence to those who use liquor even moderately. The effects of drinking are truly appalling. Quarrels among friends, strife in families, and crimes in the country, whereby prisons are crowded and thousands become insane, are some of the evils which drink produces. The man who is thus deceived displays a lack of sound judgment and good sense.

THE DRUNKARD'S PORTRAIT.

Verse 29. If you go into the house of the wine-bibber, or visit the prisons where such persons are incarcerated, you will see abundant proofs of the truth of this text. Drunkards are generally persons who are constantly getting into trouble. They are contentious and quarrelsome, and they will do things when under the influence of liquor that they would not dare to do when sober. A more correct portrait of a drunkard cannot be drawn. See the wounded face and the bloodshot eyes, etc.

THE CAUTION.

Verse 31. "Look not." This is the best precaution against the danger. The sight might lead to entanglement. The caution means to keep away from the evil indicated. The appearance is enticing, and if the eye remains fixed upon the sparkling cup for any length of time, the temptation to use it will become stronger, and become so much more difficult to resist. Think who it is who says, "Look not." It was Solomon, the wisest of men. The sayings of the wise and good are especially worthy of the attention of young people. They have experience which you have not learned, and from the abundance of their knowledge they speak to you.

THE CONSEQUENCES.

Verse 32, 33. "At the last." When the drink has done its deadly evil, it produces nothing but misery. We see how it progresses as time advances, and what bitter results follow. There is no evil which cannot be perpetrated when Satan get a man completely under the influence of liquor. He goes headlong, and becomes utterly regardless of all consequences. Hungry children, heart-broken parents, ruined wives, all are regarded as of no consequence. Take the caution as to you, "Look not thou upon the wine."

Mamma (to Flossie who had been lurching with a little friend)—"I hope you were very polite, Flossie, at the table, and said, 'Yes, please,' and 'No, thank you.'" Flossie—"Well, I didn't say, 'No, thank you,' because, you see, I took everything."