

The term 'castle' is misleading. For, unlike the flinty masses of masonry of Europe that delight to perch themselves upon lofty cliffs, these strongholds rarely present high walls to the sight, and are generally built upon undulating or level ground. The ideal plan is to arrange the moats or embankments so that a moderately rugged hill shall be near the centre, thus serving to increase the strength of the tenshu, or citadel. As a rule, you will find a triple system of circumvallation, one inside the other; the outermost one being from two to four miles in circumference, while the innermost one is reduced to a massive inclosure of a few hundred yards. The largest castle in Japan is at Tokyo. The perimeter of its outlying line of circumvallation exceeds ten miles—in fact, a part of the metropolis is built between the first and second systems. The next one in size is said to be at Shidzuoka.

THE TEMPLES OF JAPAN

are of great interest. During a summer vacation trip into the interior, our author visited the famous Yomel gate of the Nikko temples. It is thus graphically described:

"It has exhausted the art and ingenuity of the architect. It is a bewildering mass of tracery. For beauty of design and prodigality of decoration it is matchless. It is equally lovely whether glittering in the sunlight or shimmering in the moonbeams. The railing of its balcony is supported by dragon's heads. Just above the portal are two white dragons linked in terrific combat. Underneath you see groups of children playing. Beneath these are busts of Chinese sages in various philosophical attitudes, such as only Chinese philosophers can assume. The dragons, upholding the massive roof, with their flaming eyes and gaping crimson jaws, seem to be on the qui vive for evil spirits."

No one omits a visit to

FUJIYAMA,

"the centre-piece of Japanese scenery. It is the first point of land that the approaching traveller sights as he comes bounding over the waves a hundred miles away." Mr. Maclay climbed to its summit, which he found to be a rugged country, "three miles in circumference," and "covered with lava hills, one of which was two hundred feet high at least."

We can hardly believe, much less understand, the rapidity and certainty with which alterations are being effected in the ideas and habits of the wonderful people to whom our attention has been prominently turned of late. Of one fact we may rest assured, that the salt which alone can save Japan from destruction is the salt of Christian example and doctrine.

THE QUIET HALF-HOUR.

BY J. R. MILLER.

General Gordon, whose name shines so brightly in the records of England's noble soldiers, was as loyal to Christ as he was to his country. Indeed, noble as he was as a soldier, he was nobler still as a Christian. Each morning, during his journey in the Soudan, there was one half-hour when there lay outside General Gordon's tent a handkerchief, and the whole camp knew the meaning of that small token, and most religiously was it respected by all, whatever their creed, colour, or business. No foot dared to enter the tent while the handkerchief lay there. No force of sentinels could better have guarded the tent door. No message, however pressing, was ever sent in; whatever it was, of life or death, it had to wait until the guardian sign was lifted and removed. Every one knew that God and Gordon were alone there together; that the servant prayed and communed, and that the Master heard and answered. Into the heart so opened, the presence and the life of God came down. Into the life so laid upon the altar, the strength of God was poured. No wonder that when that man came out of his tent the glory of God seemed to shine on his face and the fragrance of heaven to cling to his very garments, and that he had such sublime peace and such calm, majestic power.

We all need to get more of such half-hours into our lives: when God's very angels will pause in reverent silence at our doors, while within we commune with the blessed Trinity. Then we shall be strong for service, and our influence shall be hallowed by the very touch of Christ.

At the point where the Mississippi River flows out of Lake Itasca it is only ten feet wide and eighteen inches deep.

THE BOYS WE NEED.

Here's to the boy who's not afraid
To do his share of work;
Who never is by toil dismayed,
And never tries to shirk.

The boy whose heart is brave to meet
All lions in his way;
Who's not discouraged by defeat,
But tries another day.

The boy who always means to do
The very best he can;
Who always keeps the right in view,
And aims to be a man.

Such boys as these will grow to be
The men whose hands will guide
The future of our land; and we
Shall speak their names with pride.

All honour to the boy who is
A man at heart, I say;
Whose legend on his shield is this:
"Right always wins the day."

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, DECEMBER 4, 1897.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

DECEMBER 12, 1897.

Jeremiah's hope in God's mercy.—Lam. 3. 22-36.

THE WEELING PROPHECY.

If grief is the occasion of tears, Jeremiah certainly had great cause for weeping, for all through his life his path was crowded with such trouble as seldom fell to the lot of man. You must remember, too, that he was only a youth of twelve years when called to the prophetic office, so that he could not have had much experience.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

Verses 22-26. If he had become disheartened, and even turned aside from the path of duty, it would have been no marvel, for you know afflictions try men's souls. He knew that the Almighty was on his side, and therefore he was not afraid, hence he speaks the language of triumph and exults in God's goodness. Verses 24 and 25 are especially of the joyful kind. He is not afraid, because the Lord is his portion. Is the Lord your portion?

HIS EXPERIENCE.

Verse 27. Young men have to perform duties, and sometimes those duties are irksome and hard to perform. The yoke is irksome, the discipline is severe, the burden is heavy, but all this is for good. It is the way that heroes are made. Difficulties help to develop the whole man and fit him for the duties which he will have to perform. Jeremiah knew what he was saying when he gave utterance to those verses.

HIS PATIENCE.

Verses 28-30. His duty. He must not murmur when trials were his lot. Better for him to meditate and review the dealings of God with him. Afflictions produce patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed. All things work together for good to them who love God.

He will experience many obstacles and what will try him severely, but let him be assured that if he walks by faith nothing shall harm him.

GOD'S KINDNESS.

Verses 31-36. How descriptive of God's goodness. What precious promises are here! If these verses were committed to memory by every Junior who should read these lines, they would be a source of consolation, and a grand preservative against despondency in the season of distress and sorrow. Jeremiah was describing very largely his own experience in this lesson, which should serve to encourage every young person to imitate his example.

WHAT ALLEN GAINED BY HIS LOSS.

BY BELLE V. CHISHOLM.

"No, sonny; that half-dollar is bogus; let me have some of that small change instead," and Allen counted out the amount, saying as he handed it to the gentleman, "I am sure I did not know that half-dollar was not good."

"No, of course you didn't. Some unprincipled scamp has passed it on you," answered the gentleman. "But you can easily tell from its ring that it is not genuine," and taking it from the boy's hand he tapped it against some other coins in his purse, asking, "Don't you notice a difference?"

"Yes," admitted Allen, as he put the spurious coin back in his pocket, and resumed his cry of "Press, Dispatch, Chronicle," but much of the cheer in his voice had disappeared with the knowledge that he had been cheated out of his hard-earned savings; for, to the poor newsboy, even fifty cents seemed a large sum to lose.

A little later, as he was hurrying along, trying to make up for lost time, he was accosted by another newsboy, with, "Say, Allen, can you give me change for a dollar bill?" The old gentleman over there wants to catch the train, and I can't make the change."

"Yes," said Allen, always ready to accommodate his friends; but just as he was ready to hand out the change, an evil thought was suggested to him, and putting his hand in his pocket he handed out the bogus half-dollar, thinking Tom would give it to the gentleman and he would never hear of it again. Instead, Tom gave the customer the good half-dollar, and dropped the bad one into his own pocket-book, counting out small change to make up what was needed on the dollar.

Allen did not feel comfortable over the disposition he had made of the worthless coin, but aside from the danger of being found out and losing the money, he did not give the subject a thought. That evening, however, he chanced to overhear some men talking about a young bank-clerk who had been arrested for passing counterfeit money. The amount, it seemed, was quite small—only ten dollars—but, as one man explained, the crime was as great as if it had been hundreds of dollars.

Allen listened and trembled as he heard the subject discussed. He was quick to understand the nature of the crime and the risk he had taken in giving the bogus half-dollar after he knew it was not genuine. He was already a criminal in the eye of the law, and if found out might be sent to prison. Thoroughly alarmed, he slipped out of the grocery, and with a hope that Tom might yet have the useless money in his possession, he did not slacken his pace until he had reached the little house where Tom's mother lived.

To his great joy the silver piece was found in Tom's pocket-book, just where he had put it, and it was to his interest as well as Allen's to accept the genuine one so eagerly offered in its place. Allen lost the fifty cents, of course, but the lesson he learned was worth many times that amount to him; although now grown to man's estate, he still keeps the spurious coin—a reminder of how near he came to counterfeiting his life.

AN UNKNOWN LAND.

The boys and girls who study geography will know what a mesa is. It is a high tableland. There is a mesa in Mexico which has interested people for number of years. No one knew what was on top, and some curious theories were developed. Some people thought that a race of cliff-dwellers would be found there. Others thought that valuable metals would be found on top, while others thought that probably there would be found remains of the old cliff-dwellers—household utensils, perhaps remnants of the clothing, the ornaments,

and furniture; things that would tell more about these long-time-ago people than has yet been found out.

This mesa is called Mesa Encantada. It is seven hundred feet high, and there is no way by which men may climb to the top. Scientists have been greatly interested in this mesa, because at its foot the bones of the eohippus, the animal that is older in the history of animals than the horse, have been found. Bits of pottery were also found that resembled the household utensils of lost peoples who used to live in Mexico hundreds of years ago. Legends and stories have been told over and over again about these strange peoples. Some men of science who are greatly interested in the history of this long-ago time, and who are able to tell from bits of pottery and fragments of stone how the peoples of those days lived and worked, about what they believed, the wars they fought, the battles they lost and won, wanted to go to the Mesa Encantada to see what it would tell of the people who had once lived on it. These learned men went to Mexico with lines and a mortar such as would be used in reaching a ship cast ashore. After pitching a camp about a mile away, they took all the appliances for reaching the top to the foot of the cliff. The first line fired by the mortar failed to reach the top. The second shot carried the line over the mesa at the narrowest part. After this the heavier ropes were drawn over the cliff by using the lighter lines, and a boatswain's chair was arranged to carry the explorer to the top. It took two days to do this. At last everything was ready, and the first man to step on top of this mesa in centuries got into the chair and was carried by the use of ropes over pulleys to the top. The man was pulled to the top by the use of a horse and a mule secured from a near-by farm, just as you have seen freight taken from the hold of a steamer at the docks. When the explorer reached the top he found a flat area of about seventeen acres, with nothing interesting, nothing to tell the story of any people who might have lived on the mesa when the world was young. He stayed several hours, and then returned to the plains by the same way he went up. Nothing was determined except that neither people nor wealth were on top of the Mesa Encantada.

THE BOYS AND THE LION.

Mr. James D. Carlisle, of Pittsburg, Pa., has received a letter from Rev. Edwin H. Richards, missionary of Inhambane South Africa, in which the writer gives a most interesting account of an adventure he, with several of his native boys, had while travelling in the desert lately. They had camped, tired and hungry, for the night, when "at nine o'clock a majestic roar at most uncomfortably short range, shook me right out of my umbrella, and shook the boys right out of their mosquito blankets, and our poor dog scrambled between my legs so quickly that I hardly knew whether it were not the beast in question. The rifle was hunted up, and a ball was projected in the near vicinity of the spot where the thunder came from. We would not have wounded his majesty's feelings, no, not for the lives of half of us, but if we had been able to have planted an explosive shell right in the centre of his intellectual works, or blown his teeth out and his claws off, we would have performed the feat. His lordship replied by gently lashing his sides with his tail, and soon made about half a circle around us, and got off another monologue on the subject of diet. My first thought on the matter, as soon as I could think at all, was that the Lord had answered our prayers wrong side round and bottom side up, and that the 'meat' was about to go the wrong way altogether.

"But the Lord is mindful of his own." He remembers his children. We did everything we could to entertain that wily beast. We kindled a fire, we sang hymns to him, we prayed for him to keep out of our nest, we shot guns over him, we waved torches at him, we shook the wash-dish at him, we danced for him, and left no means at our disposal untried in the way of pastime for him. He was apparently delighted with our 'show,' and did what he could towards reviving our depressed spirits. He walked round about us all night long, replying to our every effort with blood-curdling encores. But at the very first blush of day he apparently bethought himself of his wife and children, and hastily betook himself away, no doubt conjuring up some lame excuse for being out so late. I sincerely hope Mrs. Lady Lion was on the sharp lookout for him, and gave him a talking to at home."