

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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The Reason Why.

BY PRISCILLA LEONARD.

I know a little maiden who is always in a hurry,
She races through her breakfast to be in time for school;
She scribbles at her desk in a hasty sort of flurry,
And comes home in a breathless whirl that fills the vestibule.

She hurries through her studying, she hurries through her sewing,
Like an engine at high pressure, as if leisure were a crime;
She's always in a scramble, no matter where she's going,
And yet—would you believe it—she never is in time!

It seems a contradiction, until you know the reason,
But I'm sure you think it simple, as I do, when I state
That she never has been known to begin a thing in season,
And she's always in a hurry, because she starts too late.

HOW THEY LEARNED ABOUT GOD.

BY RUTH ARGYLE.

Do you see the woman who sits in the left corner of the picture? Let us hear her story: One day her husband was very angry with her, and threatened to kill her because she had listened to the "white preacher-man," who was telling the people in the village about the true God, and the Saviour who died for our salvation, and the beautiful home awaiting all those who love and serve him on earth. But the woman longed to hear more about these wonderful things; so, when her hard day's work was done and her lazy husband lay fast asleep in their miserable hut, she crept softly away to the missionary's house, which was cleaner and pleasanter than her own home. It was so late that nobody was up, but the woman's timid knock brought Mr. Wilson to the door. He asked her what she wanted.

"To hear more about the 'new God,' please, good man."

So the missionary's wife brought the poor creature in and told her all about the blessed Saviour; and in the early dawn she went on her way rejoicing. She had found a Friend who would love and guard her all her life long and receive her into his own beautiful home when she should die. How happy she was!

"Where have you been, bad woman?" cried the angry husband when she came home.

"I have been to hear more about the true God. Our gods are nothing but bits of wood and lumps of earth that men make; they are no gods."

She was going to tell him all that she had just heard, but he struck her down with his club, and continued striking until he thought her dead; then he left the poor creature lying senseless on the mud floor of the hut and hurried away to brag among his friends of the brave deed he had just done. They praised him, you may be sure, and not one of them cared for the sufferings of the poor woman he had left to die alone. But the two women whom you see standing in the picture found her, and, not knowing what else to do, carried her to Mrs. Wilson's, who took her in and nursed her back to life. The kind act won the confidence of these three women, and the fourth soon joined them in their frequent visits to the missionary's house, and learned with them the way of peace. The enraged husband would not allow his wife to come back to her home, so she gladly gave up her life to spreading the story of the cross and him who hung thereon, among her friends.

The other three women, who were gentle, hard-working wives, did not grow discouraged because they could not go about telling the story of Jesus, but in their simple way lived the story their lips told; and that is just what we must

do. It is not enough for us to say that we are Christians; we must behave like Christians. We must be gentle, obedient, forgiving children of our Father in heaven.

ABOUT THE SUN.

Mornings when it was pitch dark, have you never woken quite early to find you could see nothing, not even your hand? As you lay there watching, the light came gradually creeping in at the window. If you have done this, you will have noticed that you can at first only just distinguish the dim outline of the furniture; then you can tell the difference between the white cloth on the table and the dark wardrobe beside it, then, little by little, all the smaller objects—the handles of the drawer, the pictures on the wall, and the different colours of all the things in the room—

hundred and seventy-one years for you to reach the end of your journey.

And when you arrived there, how large do you think you would find the sun to be? A learned Greek was laughed at by all his fellow-Greeks because he said the sun was as large as that little corner of their country called the Peloponnese. How astonished they would have been if they could have known that not only is he bigger than the whole of Greece, but more than a million times bigger than the whole world!

Our world itself, as you already know, is a very large place, so large that it would take nearly a month for an express train to travel around it. Yet even this great globe is but a very small object when compared to the sun, for it measures only eight thousand miles across, while the sun measures more than eight hundred and fifty thousand. Imagine that you could cut the sun and



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become clearer and clearer, till at last you see all plainly in broad daylight.

What has been happening here, and why have the things in the room become visible so slowly? We say that the sun is rising, but we know very well that it is not the sun which moves, but that our earth has been turning slowly round, and bringing the little spot on which we live face to face with the great fiery ball, so that his beams can fall upon us.

How far away from us do you think the sun is? On a fine summer's day, when we can see him clearly, it looks as if we had only to get into a balloon and reach him as he sits in the sky; and yet we know quite certainly that he is more than ninety-one millions of miles from our earth. These figures are so large that you cannot really grasp them. But imagine yourself in an express train, travelling at the rate of sixty miles an hour, and never stopping. If it were possible for you to travel at that rate, straight to the sun, it would take one

the earth each in half, as you would cut an apple; then, if you were to lay the flat side of the half-earth on the flat side of the half-sun, it would take one hundred and six such earths to stretch across the face of the sun.

One of the best ways to form an idea of the great size of the sun, is to imagine it to be hollow, like an air-ball, and then see how many earths it would take to fill it. You would hardly believe that it would take one million three hundred and thirty-one thousand globes the size of our world squeezed together. Just think; if an immense giant could travel all over the universe and gather a number of worlds, each as big as ours, and were to make first a heap of ten such worlds, how huge it would be. Then he must have a hundred such heaps of ten to make a thousand worlds; and then he must gather together again a thousand times that thousand to make a million; and should he put them all into the sun-ball, he would fill only about three-quarters of it.

After hearing this, you will not be astonished to learn that so immense a ball should give out a very great amount of light and heat, so great that it is almost impossible to form any idea of it. It will help us to understand this, if we remember how few of the rays, which dart out on all sides from this fiery ball, can reach our tiny globe, and yet how powerful they are.

Look at the flame of a lamp in the middle of the room, and see how its light pours out on all sides and into every corner, then take a grain of mustard-seed, which will very well represent our earth in size, and hold it up at a distance from the lamp. How very few of all those rays which are filling the room fall on the little mustard-seed. And yet, as a grain of mustard-seed is to the flame of the lamp, so is our earth to the great globe of the sun. On! the two-billionth part of all the rays sent out by the sun ever fall upon the earth. But this small quantity does nearly all the work of our world.

In order to see how powerful the sun's rays are you have only to take a magnifying glass and gather them to a point on a piece of brown paper, for they will at once set the paper on fire. Sir John Herschel tells us that at the Cape of Good Hope the heat was even so great that he cooked a piece of beefsteak and roasted some eggs by merely putting them in the sun in a box with a glass lid.

Indeed, just as we should all be frozen to death if the sun were cold, so we should all be burned up with the heat if his fierce rays fell with all their might upon us. But we have an unseen veil around us, made of—what do you think?—those tiny particles of water which the sunbeams have turned into an invisible vapour and scattered in the air. These cut off part of the great heat, which would otherwise reach the earth, and thus, even in the hottest days of midsummer, the air is much cooler and more pleasant than it would be were the sun's rays to fall with their full force upon us.

MR. LINCOLN AND THE DYING SOLDIER ROY.

One day, in May, 1863, while the great war was raging between the North and South, President Lincoln paid a visit to one of the military hospitals, says an exchange. He had spoken many cheering words of sympathy to the wounded as he proceeded through the various wards, and now he was at the bedside of a Vermont boy of about sixteen years of age, who lay there mortally wounded.

Taking the dying boy's thin, white hands in his own, the President said, in a tender tone:

"Well, my poor boy, what can I do for you?"

The young fellow looked up into the President's kindly face and asked, "Won't you write to my mother for me?"

"That I will," answered Mr. Lincoln; and calling for a pen, ink and paper, he seated himself by the side of the bed and wrote from the boy's dictation. It was a long letter, but the President betrayed no sign of weariness. When it was finished, he rose, saying:

"I will post this as soon as I get back to my office. Now, is there anything else I can do for you?"

The boy looked up appealingly to the President.

"Won't you stay with me?" he asked. "I do want to hold on to your hand."

Mr. Lincoln at once perceived the lad's meaning. The appeal was too strong for him to resist; so he sat down by his side and took hold of his hand. For two hours the President sat there patiently as though he had been the boy's father.

When the end came he bent over and folded the thin hands over his breast. As he did so he burst into tears, and when, soon afterward, he left the hospital, they were still streaming down his cheeks.