

PLEASANT HOURS

PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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UNCLE TALKS.

WONDERFUL TREE OF MADAGASCAR.

WINTER'S snows have already begun to cover the earth with fleecy robes. In the garden, all except the hardiest plants are either covered up or removed indoors to be saved from frost; and the vines are protected with straw and earth up to the trellis-work. The trees alone, standing bare and leafless, must face the storm and stress of winter unsheltered.

There are trees on three side of the homestead—a row of cherry trees in the wide lane, some noble, towering maples in the rear, with a half-dozen fruit trees, and right before the door, and half-way between it and the gate, a grand old apple-tree, whose wide-spreading limbs make a favourite seat for the boys in summer, and whose sea of blossoms in spring is a marvel of beauty to all who live in the neighbourhood. It apples are the biggest, reddest and sweetest on any tree for miles around. But some of its limbs are showing signs of decay and ere many more summers elapse, the old tree must be brought under the axe.

"Dear old tree!" said the boys, when Uncle John, after inspecting it, the other day, told them of this decision. "It seems like a friend to us," added Tom.

"The young folks will miss it very much," said mamma sadly.

"Yes," said Uncle John. "There is no plant in the whole world so deserving of man's affection as a tree; yet there is none that exacts less care and trouble at his hands. In our climate we think less of trees than people do in some other parts of the world."

"Oh, yes," said Ellie, "I remember reading the Bible, a little while ago, in Deuteronomy xxii. 19, where it says 'the tree of the field is man's life,' but I never could make out just what it meant."

"It means," replied uncle, "that the trees are necessary to his comfort and, in some parts of our earth, to his very existence. There are trees in some countries that seem to supply almost every thing that man needs for his subsistence."

"Tell us of them, uncle, please," cried Ted, who had been an eager listener. "Are they big apple-trees like ours?"

"No, my boy; they bear something that may not be quite so toothsome, but it is much more precious than a sweet apple. Humbolt," continued Uncle John, "mentions a tree he saw in South America, and which he calls the cow-tree. It is a tree so called because it takes the place of a cow in supplying the people with milk."

"How funny to think of wooden cows that give real good, sweet milk!" cried Ellie.

"Yes," continued the traveller, "these trees grow out of the rocks. They have large, woody roots, and the leaves are dry and leathery. For several months of the year no rain falls to moisten the leaves and the branches look dry and dead; but when the trunk is pierced, a sweet and nourishing milk oozes out. The best time for milking, the natives say, is at sunrise, and at that hour they go out with bowls and calabashes, to pierce the wooden cows. They make incisions in the branches, and soon have the bowls overflowing with nice, fresh milk, which some drink on the spot, while others take it home to the little ones."

"But does it taste like real milk, uncle?" asked Tom, incredulously.

"So I gather from what travellers say. The smell is pleasant and the taste agreeable."

"There is surely no other plant like it in the world," said Ted, in wondering tones.

"Wrong, my boy. There are others, but they don't give milk. There's a remarkable tree in the island of Madagascar, called the 'Traveller's Tree.' The branches don't grow out of the trunk, but spring out in a line, like the spokes of a wheel. Each branch grows at the end a big broad leaf which spreads out like a fan. Under the branches, a dew collects in the evening, in a myriad of drops that form little streams which run down the lower side of

from its rind or shell are made spoons, cups, bowls, and even tables. The bark of the tree is made into twine, cloth, and mats; the tender young buds are eaten, and the sap makes capital sugar. The tough, leathery leaves are used for sails for boats, for sacks, for baskets, and thatch for cottages."

"Well!" exclaimed the deeply interested group, "surely no other tree can be so useful."

ings are used for stuffing pillows. Its leaves make a capital cloak for wet days, and the chopsticks, which you have seen Chinamen use instead of knife and fork, are also made out of its stems. But that isn't the whole; its tender shoots are boiled and eaten and the pulp is transformed into paper, and the pith into pickles and sweetmeats. Boats, floats, sails, cable, rigging, fishing-rods and fishing-baskets, are all made from the same tree. Chinese farmers have it in the form of carts, wheelbarrows, ploughs, wheels and fences. In fact, I might go on for an hour telling you about this remarkable tree which is everywhere used by the Celestials. If there is a more useful plant on the globe, I have never heard of it."

ABOUT YOUR BOYS.

TREAT your boys as though they were of some importance, if you would have them manly and self-reliant.

Be careful of the little courtesies. You cannot expect your boy to be respectful, thoughtful and kind unless you first set him the example.

If you would have your boy make you his confidant, take an active interest in all he does; don't be too critical, and ask for his views and opinions at all times.

Don't keep your boys in ignorance of things they should know. It is not the wholesome truth, but the unwholesome way in which it is acquired, that ruins many a young man.

Don't act as if you thought your boy amounted to nothing, nor be continually making comparison between him and some neighbour's son to his disadvantage; nothing will dishearten him quicker.

Don't think that everything is good enough for the boys, and that they don't care for nice things; have their room fixed up as nicely as possible; let them understand it is to be kept in order, and the result will justify your pains.

Furnish your boy with good, wholesome reading matter. Have him read to you and with you. Discuss with him what you read, and draw out his opinions and thoughts upon the subjects. Help him to think early for himself.

Make home a pleasant place; see to it that the boys don't have to go somewhere else to secure proper freedom and congenial companionship. Take time and pains to make them feel comfortable and contented, and they will not want to spend their evenings away from home.

Pick your son's associates. See to it that he has no friends you know not about. Take an interest in all his troubles and pleasures, and have him feel perfectly free to invite his friends to the house. Take a little pains to make him and his friends comfortable and happy. He will not be slow to appreciate it.

A CURE FROM SMOKING.

"Don't you know it's very wrong to smoke, my boy?" said an elderly-looking lady in a railway waiting-room to Young America, who persisted in smoking a cigarette, much to the old lady's discomfort.

"Oh, I smoke for my health," answered the boy, emitting a volume of smoke from his mouth which almost strangled the old lady.

"But you never heard of a cure from smoking," continued the old lady, when she had regained consciousness.

"Oh, yes I did," replied the boy, as he formed his mouth into a young Vesuvius, working on full time, "that's the way they cure pigs."

"Smoke on, then," quickly replied the old lady, "there's some hope for you yet."



"THE TRAVELLER'S TREE" OF MADAGASCAR.

the branches. At the base of the branch is a cuplike hollow, where the dew gathers, and thirsty travellers have just to poke something between the branches and hold a cup or jar under, and it is speedily filled with sweet, refreshing water."

"Another illustration of how our Heavenly Father provides for His creatures in all places," remarked mamma from the sofa.

"Yes; all trees are useful in some way or other," responded uncle, "but there are some whose every leaf, branch and fibre are valuable in various ways. The cocoanut is one of these; its fruit yields oil, a sugary milk and solid food, while

"Ah, but the bamboo in China is even more so," was the smiling reply. "It grows about eighty feet in height, and has neither blossom nor fruit. Its leaves are short and slender, but many of its canes are thicker than your papa's arm. The biggest stems are used for pillars of buildings and for rafters and planks, and its leaves are woven as thatching for the roof. The fibre makes mats for the floor. In many Chinese houses the bamboo is made into bedsteads, tables and chairs, and workmen also turn it into umbrellas, hats, baskets, cups, brooms, shoe-soles, pipes, bows-and-arrows and sedan-chairs. The finer fibre is spun into twine, and the shav-