

The Little Prayer.

A little maiden knelt one night—
A little maiden all in white—
She knelt and said her simple prayer,
Asking the dear Lord's tender care,
That while her eyes were sealed in sleep
He would her soul and body keep.

A stranger sat within the home,
A man whose wont it was to roam,
Who had no God, no church, no heaven,
In his hard reed, no sins forgiven;
No faith, no hope, no bed-time prayer,
No trust in God's protecting care.

He watched at first half mockingly
The child beside her mother's knee,
With eyes down-drooped and folded hands,
While over her shoulders golden strands
Of hair fell down, and snow-white feet
Peeped from her gown all fair and neat.

"And now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take."
So prayed the child, whose faith and love
Walted her simple words above.

The proud man listened, and the years,
So full of sin, doubt, griefs, and fears,
Seemed blotted out, and he, one more
A child, was kneeling on the floor
Beside his mother, while he prayed
The same prayer as this little maid.

Dear childhood's prayer, so sweet, so strong;
With power to hold the heart so long,
And melt the frost of years away,
Until the corner looked to pray;
And humbly, ere he went to sleep,
Besought the Lord his soul to keep.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. WILKINSON, D.D., Editor.

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A TALK WITH THE BOYS AND GIRLS.

DEAR young friends: I will talk with you a little on temperance. But do I hear the girls say "you do not need to talk with girls about that, for girls and women never drink." You are mistaken, girls. There are many women who drink, and who go just as low down in the ditch as any drunkard you ever saw; and many of these are mothers with little children who need their love and care. Strong drink turns a once kind parent into a selfish, brutal one; and very often little children are made to suffer from blows, hunger, cold and neglect by the ones who should provide and tenderly care for them. The children of such parents often learn to drink by seeing father and mother do so. They send their children to the saloon to get their beer, and the children begin to taste of it as they carry it home. They soon

learn to drink, and that first taste is the beginning of a drunken life. A gentleman in New York saw two little girls, six and eight years of age, who had been sent to a saloon for a pint of beer. They scarcely had got outside of the door before they each took a taste of the beer. The man watched and before they got out of sight they each took another sip. The bartender who sold them the beer said that a great many boys and girls were sent there by their parents for beer, and more than half of them had learned to drink. Now, boys and girls, I think you begin to feel as I do that this is a very important subject. But you say "What can we do about it? We are sorry these things are so." We have seen some of the misery which drunkenness causes, but we are but boys and girls and can do nothing. Oh! yes you can do something. In the first place you can sign the temperance pledge and faithfully keep it. This is a long step towards doing something, for if you keep your pledge you will never make a drunkard. Get as many others to sign the pledge as you can, and watch for an opportunity to do something else. If you are very much in earnest you will find something to do. I read of three brothers and their cousins who had formed themselves into a temperance society and were very anxious for something to do, when a man called them to help hunt for a man, who, while drunk, had wandered into the woods. He was apt to have fits and his friends had become very anxious about him. The boys were delighted to think they now had a chance to do something for a drunkard. They ran into the woods and hunted until they were very tired, and it seemed as though they had been everywhere. At last they found him stretched out on the ground, looking as though dead; but he was not dead, and men came and carried him home to his poor old mother, who tenderly cared for him and nursed him back to health. He signed the pledge and by the grace of God he was enabled to control that terrible appetite which before had control of him. What shame and suffering would have been avoided if he had signed the pledge when a boy. There was a story in Pleasant Hours a short time ago of some little girls who on their way home from school saw an intoxicated man and immediately wanted to do something for him. By singing temperance songs to him and earnestly pleading they, at last, succeeded in getting him to sign the pledge. You see children can do very much when they really try. It is with this as it is in doing anything else, you must not only begin with a great deal of interest and courage, but you must be persevering if you would succeed. Do not be discouraged if you fail once, but try, try again.

EMMA.

WHAT DO YOU READ?

THERE are few things which I am more anxious about than to have my boys and girls form a taste for good reading and read good books. I do not mean stupid "goody-goody" books, but those which are really good, bright, interesting—full of fun some of them—and all such as will help you to grow into good, genuine men and women, besides giving you a good time while you are growing. You will be pretty apt to grow like the characters you read about and admire. Think of this when you are asked to read "blood and thunder" stories, or lives of bad men and women; or silly, wishy-washy stuff often found in story-papers, about such people as never lived—and never ought to. You certainly do not wish to be like them, but you are in danger of becoming so if you read such books.

Once a boy went to my school who would read such stuff, in spite of all his mother and I said to him about it. When he was fourteen years old he thought he was in love with one of the school-girls, and that she liked another boy better than she did him, and that he was jealous of his "rival," just as folks are in the books he read. So he determined to scare her into loving him better. He asked the two to take a walk with him; and when outside of the town he suddenly stepped in front of the other two, and in a very theatrical way said to her: "Decide at once which one of us you love best, for the other must die." He

looked and acted so ridiculous that she laughed, never imagining he was in earnest. At this he exclaimed: "Ah, is this the way you scorn me?" and drew a pistol from his pocket and shot himself. Afterward they found in that same pocket a novel with exactly such a scene described. In that, the "hero" was not fatally wounded, his lady-love relented, he got well, and they were married. But poor Eddie was not so fortunate. His shot proved fatal, and he died, begging all around to save him. I always felt he was killed by trashy story-reading.

EYES THAT SEE.

WILLIAM HOLLAND was a boy who noticed things. When he drove along the country roads, or took a ramble in the fields or woods, he saw every flower, insect, and bird within the range of his vision. Every time he returned from a drive or tramp he had scores of wonderful things to tell his parents or brothers and sisters. I need not say that he gained a large amount of useful knowledge.

"My boy," his father said one day, "I am glad you like these things. You can tell something about almost every butterfly and bird in this neighbourhood. If you want any books to help you in your studies, I shall be glad to get them for you."

"Oh, will you, papa?" the boy exclaimed in delight. "Well, I should like to have two books—one on butterflies and one on birds."

"Do you know where I can get them?" asked Mr. Holland.

"No, I don't now, but I think we can find out."

And so William and his father looked through the catalogues of a number of publishers and then wrote to a certain naturalist of whom they had heard, and found that French's "Butterflies of Eastern United States," and Wheaton's "Birds of Ohio" (for the Hollands are residents of that State), were the books they needed. It was not long before William might have been seen walking out to his favourite haunts with his book-bag, containing the two volumes named, slung over his shoulder.

"I am pleased with the lad's love of nature," remarked William's mother to his father, as she watched her son's figure retreating across the clover-field. "It keeps him out of mischief and bad company."

"Yes, that is true," replied Mr. Holland. "He really doesn't care to run on the streets or mingle with rough boys, he is so busy with his studies. I think that for his own good as well as for his own happiness we must humour this scientific hobby of his. It may make him a useful man too."

Not long after this conversation William began to take notes of the interesting observations he made, and wrote several essays from them on birds and insects that pleased his teachers and schoolmates very much. Instead of writing on the old threadbare subjects that other boys chose, he had found a new field of thought, and put his own ideas and researches on paper, and that is what made his essays so interesting.

"Why, I never saw such things as you have," said Phil Morgan to William, "and I've been out in the woods many a time."

"Well, that's because you haven't used your eyes," responded William.

"I'd like to learn to use them, then. Will you let me go with you to-morrow if you take a walk?"

"Certainly."

"And I want to go, too," said Henry Towne.

"And I, too," chorused several others. And thus it happened that because one boy had eyes that saw things, a small society was formed for studying the natural objects in that locality. The Good Book says of the heathen gods, "Eyes have they but they see not." But that could not be said of these boys, for their eyes and ears soon became very acute.

William made one rule for this society which every member had to observe or be expelled, and that was that no useful bird was to be killed, no nest robbed or destroyed, and no insect treated cruelly. Thus while the boys learned a great deal and were kept out of bad company, they also had their tender and humane feelings cultivated.

THE BUSY BRAVER.

THE beaver is well known as one of the wisest builders among animals. It is not, perhaps, so generally known that the muskrat almost equals him in constructive skill. Here is a description of the muskrat and the way in which he builds his houses with several stories and spiral staircases!

The muskrat is somewhat similar in appearance to his dry-land cousin, but is incomparably larger. The brown muskrat, which is larger than the black muskrat when full grown, will measure twelve to fourteen inches from the tip of the nose to the root of the tail, and his rat-like caudal appendage sometimes attains a length of eight inches.

Next to the beaver, the muskrat is one of the most ingenious of rodents in the construction of its houses, and its mode of life and habits are very interesting. They select the low river marsh lands as their dwelling place, and there they build their homes. A location is preferred which is flooded at high tide, but which is clear of water at low ebb; and every creek and almost every little inlet to the river affords innumerable positions that are favourable. After determining upon the exact position of their house, the rats burrow leads or miniature tunnels from the water's edge at low tide to the spot upon which the house is to be erected. They then set upon collecting material for their dwelling. The tall canes and coarse marsh grass are cut down and pulled in place, and the marsh mud is used as a kind of mortar. A large circular foundation is laid, and the ground floor arranged on a level with the leads. This completed, an upward lead is made like a spiral stairway to the second floor, which is made into a room similar to the first, but of less circumference. A third and sometimes a fourth floor is built, with the spiral lead running from the level of the marsh to the top of the house, each succeeding room being of somewhat less diameter, up to the roof or dome, which acts as a water-shed. The height of each floor from the level of the marsh is regulated by the successive heights reached by the tide, the top floor being always higher than the highest water-mark at flood-tide. The rats are social in their habits, and at extremely low ebb, when the accommodations are greatest in the houses, quite a number may be found in the same hut. At flood-tide fewer are found in any one house, as the accommodation is limited then only to the upper stories, which are free of water.

"I CAN SWIM, SIR."

DURING a terrible naval battle between the English and Dutch, the English flag ship, commanded by Admiral Narborough, was drawn into the thickest of the fight. Two masts were soon shot away, and the mainmast fell with a fearful crash upon the deck. Admiral Narborough saw that all was lost unless he could bring up his ship from the right. Hastily scrawling an order, he called for volunteers to swim across the boiling water under the hail of shot and shell. A dozen sailors at once offered their services, and among them a cabin-boy.

"Why," said the admiral, "what can you do, my fearless lad?"

"I can swim, sir," the boy replied. "If I be shot, I can be easier spared than any one else."

Narborough hesitated; his men were few, and his position was desperate. The boy plunged into the sea, amidst the cheers of the sailors, and was soon lost to sight. The battle raged fiercer, and as the time went on defeat seemed inevitable. But just as hope was fading, a thundering cannonade was heard from the right, and the reserves were seen bearing down upon the enemy. By sunset the Dutch fleet were scattered far and wide, and the cabin-boy, the hero of the hour, was called in to receive the honour due to him. His modesty and bearing so won the heart of the old admiral that he exclaimed, "I shall live to see you have a flagship of your own!"

The prediction was fulfilled when the cabin-boy, having become Admiral Cloudesley Shovel, was knighted by the king.