

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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We Know Not.

There may not be time on the morrow
For all the grand deeds we have
planned;
It may be too late for our sorrow,
Too late for the kind, helping hand.

The friend whom we hurt in the morning
Ere night may be gone from our reach;
The lips that brought us grave warning
Too soon may be closed to all speech.

Death's angel may knock at our portal
While we are too hurried for prayer;
The light of that country immortal
May dawn on our lives unaware.

At twilight the latch may be lifted,
Or at night, when the world is at rest,
The darkness be suddenly rifted
And pale hands be clasped on our
breast.

Ah! some time, uncared for, unheeded,
Earth's glories shall proffer their
dower—
While penitent faith is sore needed—
We know not the day nor the hour.

VICTOR THE CRIPPLE.

Just outside of the huge moss-grown
gate of the city of S—, in France,
there dwelt in the midst of the last war
a little family named Nonen.

The family was poor, and the house it
occupied was small. The only child under
the tiled roof was a pale little cripple
named Victor, who, in spite of his bodily
pain, was bright and wise.

He nearly always sat in a little arbour
beneath some vines, with his crutches by
his side, and watched the people passing
by.

Victor had heard that there was a war
going on away off to the north of them,
and he knew that Pierre Dumas, the
waggoner, and Jacques Blanc, the wine-
merchant, and Armand Dubec, the char-
coal-dealer, had all marched off with
guns in their hands, and blue caps
on their heads, and that there were ter-
rible stories from the cities where they
were.

Now, Victor's parents tried to keep
their child in ignorance of the awful bat-
tles, because they thought him too sensi-
tive and too delicate to hear such tales.

But Victor, pale and fragile as he was,
had the soul of a lion, and this is how
it showed itself:

One afternoon, while he was sitting in
his usual place, with his crooked legs
bent up under him, looking forth on the
hot little square in front of the house, he
suddenly heard a great noise of drums
that called the long-roll. He raised his
head.

He saw the people who were going by
stop and stare at each other. Presently
a lancer on horseback came galloping
down the paved street. He was covered
with dust, and his horse's sides and neck
were flecked with foam. Scarcely had he
gone by when Victor's father came run-
ning in from his work with his hands all
red, just as he had taken them from the
dye-pot, and crying:

"The Germans are coming! the Ger-
mans are coming!"

His wife said:
"What, then! they will not kill us;
we are safe enough."

"Indeed, we are not, mother," cried
the dyer. "They will seize us as prison-
ers, steal all our food and furniture, and
perhaps burn our house over our heads.
We are ordered by the mayor to go in-
stantly within the city gates, and I am
commanded to join the soldiers."

Without Victor beheld the people hast-
ening with all speed through the city

gate, carrying in their arms their most
valuable things, such as trunks, vases,
clocks, and old chairs, and he could not
help laughing at their haste and fright.

"Come, Victor," said his mother, "you
had better climb upon your father's back,
and he will take you to Aunt Therese's,
where you will be entirely safe."

"No, no," cried Victor; "I can walk
with my crutches. Each of you take
something that you would not like to
lose, and I will follow behind."

The dyer and his wife were accustomed
to obey the cool-headed child, and they
accordingly did as he directed.

Everything and everybody was in a
bustle. Men and women ran hither and
thither. The shutters of the shops were
being put up, drums were beating, bells
were ringing, and soldiers were march-
ing to and fro.

But great things took place in another
hour.

Victor beheld, to his intense astonish-
ment, half-a-dozen men in blue coats,
and with blue cloth caps on their heads,
ride at a gallop down the street with
their lances glittering in the sun. They
had brown faces, yellow beards, and
they looked strong and vigorous.

using of lights in the house at night, and
ordered that no one go abroad after eight
o'clock. If lights were found in a house
everybody would be arrested and sever-
ely punished.

"What does that mean, mother?"
asked Victor, with burning cheeks.

"Why can't we have lights?"
"Because they will suspect us of mak-
ing signals to our army in the distance,"
said the mother; while Victor's little fist
shut up tight with rage.

Everything was so strange when it be-
came dark! Not a window showed a
candle. In the streets a few embers were
burning, and by their light Victor could
see the soldiers with their long coats
down to their heels, and their shining
helmets walking to and fro and hear
their strange talk, and loud, hoarse
laughter.

There seemed to be soldiers every-
where. Drums were heard on all hands,
and the rattle of wheels came from all
quarters.

People began to ask: "Where are our
soldiers? Why don't they come and
fight these invaders? Are they afraid of
them?"

In a little while some more soldiers
knocked at the door, and said that they
wanted two mattresses, a quart of milk,
and an armful of fire-wood. They had a
cart at the door, and they had made col-
lections from every house.

The dyer protested, but it was no good.
Besides taking the bedding and the wood
and the milk, they made the dyer go
with them.

Victor cried out from his dark corner:
"How dare you take my father away
you cowards! If I were strong enough
I would shoot you!"

At this the soldiers raised their lan-
terns above their heads, and beheld Vic-
tor sitting upright in his chair, looking
very furious. They saw that he was a
cripple, and therefore they went on with
their work as if he were not there, and
had said nothing.

This made him more enraged than
ever, and he resolved to do what he could
to hurt them.

He beheld them take away the goods,
and he heard his mother weeping in the
silent room after they were gone.

Now the mayor was not a dull man.
He had had his power taken out of his
hands; his town had been overrun, and
he had devised a plan to capture these
intruders.

A short time after the soldiers had
gone, a soft knock came to the door, and
it was cautiously opened by Aunt
Therese.

In walked two gentlemen. Said one
of them:

"I am the mayor. I want to speak to
this gentleman in private; and we can-
not talk in the street in safety, and I
should like to sit in your room for a mo-
ment, if there is no one here."

"No," said Aunt Therese, forgetting
Victor for the moment, "there is no one
here but me, and you are welcome. I
will go away."

"Thank you," said the mayor.
The two gentlemen immediately began
to discuss something.

It appeared that there had approached
on the south side of the town two regi-
ments of French soldiers, and they were
hidden in the woods about two miles
off. On the north side of the town were
two more regiments, about the same dis-
tance off. Now, when all was ready for
both parties to advance, it had been
agreed that some signal should be given.

Therefore it was arranged that a signal
light should be displayed in two win-
dows, one on the north side of the city,
and one on the south side. It had been
arranged how to show the light on the



VICTOR THE CRIPPLE.

In ten minutes more they were in the
street, and the little cottage-door was
locked, and the shutters closed.

Victor bade adieu to his blooming
roses, and hobbled away between his
father and mother toward the city gate.
But all this tumult was useless; there
were very few soldiers in the place, and
defence was out of the question.

The mayor had been advised that a
regiment of Germans were within three
hours' ride of the town, and at first he
thought of resisting them, but now he
determined to surrender the city if he
were asked to do so.

Meanwhile he sent despatches by mes-
senger and telegraph to the nearest por-
tions of the French army, begging them
to come to his assistance.

In a little while Victor was safely
placed in his aunt's house, and he took
a position where he could see all that
went on.

These were the advance of the much-
dreaded Germans.

People fled shrieking before them, and
the Germans broke out into shouts of
laughter to see them run to their houses
like rabbits.

But by-and-bye there was heard the
roll of drums, and the ground trembled
under a heavy tread, and Victor soon be-
held a regiment of foot-soldiers come
down the street. They were not very
neat-looking men. They all had blankets
slung over their shoulders, and they were
all spattered with mud.

The regiment halted a little way off,
and the men stacked their arms, making
them rattle on the pavement. Then they
began to build camp-fires in the street,
and to light their own pipes.

Presently they began to set guards
all about the streets, and in a little
while three tall officers came around, and
knocked at all the doors, and forbade the