

That Things Are No Worse, Sire.

From the time of our old revolution,
When we threw off the yoke of the king,
Has descended this phrase to remember,
To remember, to say, and to sing;
'Tis a phrase that is full of a lesson,
It can comfort and warm like a fire,
It can cheer us when days are the darkest:
"That things are no worse, O my Sire!"

"I was King George's prime minister said it;
To the king who had questioned in heat
What he meant by appointing thanksgiving,
In such times of ill-luck and defeat;
"What's the cause of your Day of Thanks-
giving,
Tell me, pray?" cried the king, in his ire;
Said the minister: "This is the reason—
That things are no worse, O my Sire!"

There has nothing come down in the story,
Of the answer returned by the king;
But I think on his throne he sat silent,
And confessed it a sensible thing.
For there's never a burden so heavy
That it might not be heavier still;
There is never so bitter a sorrow
That the cup could not fuller fill.
—Wide Awake.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, AUGUST 25, 1894.

THE MOTHER OF JESUS.

BY THE REV. W. CRAFTS.

MARY, the mother of Jesus, was born and brought up in a little village called Nazareth, in the country of Palestine. The houses were many of them eaves and dug-outs in the sides of the hills; and others were built like common stone walls of rough rocks, with mud for mortar, and dirt for carpets, with no windows, and only one low door, so that the houses looked like very large dog-kennels.

The people were most of them so ignorant and wicked that men in other parts of the country used to say: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Mary was one the poorest of these Nazarenes. We know this because there was a law in that country that the people who were too poor to bring a lamb to the Temple as an offering could bring two pigeons. Mary brought two pigeons; and so we know that she was very poor.

When I was in Nazareth, they showed me a cave in the rock, with three rooms in it, which they said was the house where Mary lived. If that is not the one, hers was doubtless no better. In the centre of the village there is a very old fountain, where the people get their water for drinking and washing. The women in that country do all the carrying of water. We saw a great many of them—young and old—coming to the fountain with jars as big as water buckets, which they filled with water and carried back on their heads to their homes. This is called the Virgin's

Fountain, because, many years ago, just in this way, the Virgin Mary used to come with the other barefooted girls, to carry home water for the family. Some of those we saw had quite pretty faces, which made us think how Mary might have looked. But there were no faces so beautiful and thoughtful as some of your mothers' and sisters' in this country, where we put knowledge into the heads of girls, instead of putting jars of water on them.

When Mary grew up to be a young woman, she was engaged to be married to a young carpenter named Joseph, who came to Nazareth from Bethlehem. Strangely enough, there is only one Jew in Nazareth to-day, and his name is Joseph, and he is a carpenter.

This Joseph, who was engaged to be married to Mary, was not an old man, as you often see him represented in pictures that are made by people who worship Mary instead of God, and who want to make people think that Joseph was not afterwards Mary's husband, but some old uncle. Before Mary and Joseph were married, however, an angel came to the cave or cot where Mary lived, and told her wonderful news—that she was to have the blessing that all Jewish women longed for, to be the mother of the promised Messiah—the mother of Jesus. She would be his mother, and he would have no human father. God would be his father, and he would be as mighty as God in the world. Some time after that, she had her donkey saddled, and rode bravely two or three days through the country to a little village in the hills of Judea, where her cousin Elizabeth lived, to tell her the wonderful tidings. They did not have telegraph wires and mails to send their messages in those times. When she had told the news to her cousin, God made a wonderful song to come from her lips, just as a fountain bubbles up on the side of a hill.

Some time after that, she went with Joseph to visit his old home at Bethlehem, where he had gone to pay his tax. But there were so many people there from the country to pay their taxes, that there was no room for Joseph and Mary in the hotel; and so they had to find shelter in the stable, which was a cave.

During the night Jesus was born, and Mary laid him in a little stone trough or manger, where the hay was kept for one of the cattle. Mary saw a beautiful star flash out in the sky, to show people far away that Jesus was born, and where he could be found. She heard the shepherds when they came from the hills a little way off, tell about the wonderful chorus of angels that had told them that the Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born in Bethlehem. A few days afterward, she saw the wise men from far, far away, coming to see the wonderful Child, and making gifts to him of beautiful caskets of gold and frankincense and myrrh; and she knew by all these signs and the promise of the angel, that Jesus was indeed the Son of God—the Saviour of the world.

I think the reason Jesus was born of a poor woman of wicked Nazareth was to show that he could save the most wicked people, and that he loved the poor as well as the rich. The reason why he came as a little babe in Bethlehem, I think, was to show that he was the Saviour of children as well as the older people, and even of the poorest children.

When Mary's babe was eight days old, she carried him to the temple to be circumcised and named Jesus, just as babes in these days are christened and named in the church. After this, to escape from Herod the king—who was trying to kill Jesus—Mary took him down into Egypt. After Herod died, they came back and lived at Nazareth. After Jesus was born, Joseph had become the husband of Mary, and they had other children in Nazareth.

When Jesus was twelve years old, his mother took him to the beautiful Temple at Jerusalem. When Jesus grew to be a man, and began to teach and heal the people, she was with him in Cana, when he did his first miracle. When he was crucified—

Mary stood the cross beside.

When the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples at Pentecost, Mary was there with the rest.

Some people, who wickedly or ignorantly

worship Mary instead of God or the Saviour, tell a great many other stories about her, that are not true. I have told you in this five minutes all the true stories that are about Jesus' mother except one, and that is this: One day, when Jesus had a great multitude around him, and he was making all the sick people well in a minute, by speaking a word or touching them, and forgiving those who were sorry for their sins, and teaching them all how to be good, someone said to him: "Your mother and your brothers are waiting just outside the crowd, and want to say something to you."

Then Jesus said to the people, before going to see what his mother and his brothers wanted: "Whoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." That means if anyone obeys the commands of God, to love him with all the heart, and to give up everything that is sinful, and to trust in Jesus as his precious Saviour, and to try to be more like him every day; if thus anyone does the will of God, Jesus loves him just as much as his brother or his sister or his mother. Jesus loved John, who leaned upon his bosom and so often walked with him, just as much as he loved the brothers that played with him in childhood. And he loves every man or boy who tries to be a Christian, just as much as he loved his brothers or his disciples. The Saviour loves your mother, if she is a Christian, just as much as he loved his own mother. Every girl may have as warm a place in the love of the Saviour as Mary did.

In all the great picture galleries of the world, we see more pictures of Mary, the mother of Jesus, than of anybody else; but let us remember that in heaven God gives the pictures of all who love him as high a place as that of Mary the blessed. All faithful mothers are pictured as true Madonnas in the gallery of heaven. Whoever shall do the will of the Father which is in heaven, the same is the brother and sister and mother of Jesus.

GOUGH'S IDEA OF THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC.

"I WILL tell you my idea of the liquor-traffic very briefly," said Mr. Gough: "God forgive me, I do not speak of it boastfully, for my sin is ever before me—seven years of my life was a dark blank. I know what the burning appetite for stimulants is; I know all about it. As I have sat by the bedside of dying drunkards, and have held their hands in mine, I have tried to lead them at the last gasp to the Saviour who never turned away any that came to him; and yet in the light of my own experience and the experience of others that I have received through my own observation, I could say, Father in heaven, if it be thy will that man shall suffer, whatsoever seemeth good in thy sight of temporal evil, impose it on me. Let the bread of affliction be given me to eat; take from me the friends of my old age; let the hut of poverty be my dwelling-place; let the wasting hand of disease be upon me; let me walk in the whirlwind, live in the storm; let the passing away of welfare be like the flowing of a stream, and the shouts of mine enemies like rain on the waters; when I speak good, let evil come on me—do all this, but save me, merciful God, save me from the bed of a drunkard! And yet, as I shall answer to thee in the day of judgment, I had rather be the veriest sot that ever reeled through our streets than I would be the man who sold him his liquor a month."—Independent.

FAITH ILLUSTRATED.

ONE of the simplest and best illustrations of "faith" which I remember to have seen is a story told by M. Theodore Monod. A Sunday-school teacher, when teaching his class on one occasion, left his seat and went around among his scholars with his watch in his hand. Holding it out to the first child, he said:

"I give you this watch."

The boy stared at it and stood still. He then went to the next and repeated:

"I give you that watch."

The boy blushed, but that was all. One by one the teacher repeated the words and the action to each. Some stared, some blushed, some smiled incredulously, but none took the watch. But as the teacher came nearly to the bottom of the class a small boy put out his hand and took the watch which the teacher handed him. As the latter returned to his seat the fellow said, gently:

"Then, if you please, sir, the watch is mine?"

"Yes, it is yours."

The elder boys were fairly roused by this time.

"Do you mean to say, sir, that he may keep the watch?"

"Certainly; I gave it to any boy who would have it."

"Oh, if I had known that," exclaimed one of them, "I would have taken it."

"Did I not tell you I gave it to you?"

"Oh, yes; but I did not believe you were in earnest."

"So much the worse for you; he believed me, and he has the watch."

Saving faith is as simple as this. It just takes God at his word and trusts him. Though it sounds too good to be true, Christ is the gift of God, freely and fully offered (John 3. 19), "His unspeakable gift."

King Richard's Present.

BY ROBERT L. BANGS.

KING RICHARD of the lion heart,
Before a Moslem town,
Lost his good steed: pierced by a dart
His favourite went down.

On foot he fought, without a word,
Though hard it was indeed;
His Paynim foe, Saladin, heard
That he had lost his steed.

An Arab horse of noble breed
Saladin sent, and said:
"Will Richard deign to ride this steed
In place of his that's dead?"

King Richard paused; then called a knight,
Saladin's gift to try:
He viewed the charger with delight,
And marked his flashing eye.

With snort and bound and arching neck,
Away the wild steed went;
Nor could the knight his courser check
Till at Saladin's tent.

What said King Richard? "Well for me
That I thought twice to-day;
Saladin's trick I plainly see
And dearly shall he pay."

Think twice, O boys who live to-day,
Then wisely you'll decide,
Ofttimes on foot to plod your way
Though tempted much to ride.

THE OTTER.

THE otter has attained a universal reputation as a persevering foe to fish. His home is by the river and the sea, and he is so expert that a fish seldom escapes his clutches. The animal is about three and a half feet at full length, and is strongly built, and very fierce when attacked; yet they are capable of being tamed and taught to catch fish for their masters. The Chinese or Indian otter is an excellent illustration of this, for in India the trained otters are almost as common as trained dogs in our country.

The following incident shows the sagacity of these interesting animals: An otter had a pair of young ones in the Zoological Gardens in London, and in due time these young ones took to the pond, when but half filled with water, and were unable to climb up its perpendicular sides. When they had remained in the water some minutes, the mother appeared anxious to get them out, and made several vain attempts to reach them from the side of the pond. She then plunged into the water; and after playing with one of them for a short time, she put her head close to its ear, as if to make it understand her intentions, and then sprang out of the pond, while the young one clung tightly by its teeth to the fur at the root of her tail. Having landed in this manner, she rescued the other in the same