

Better Than Nothing.

BY MARGARET VANDERHOFF.

Oh, the river keeps on flowing, flowing. Till I should think there would be no more. And the little boats are going, going. While I am here on the stock-still shore.

And there's a robin, and there's a swallow. Away they go, as fast as they please; And all the other birds can follow, And even the butterflies and bees.

I'd give my arms, and be glad to do it. For a pair of nice, big, feathery wings. That catbird looks just as if he knew it— It isn't any wonder he sings!

I'd fly straight up, and over the steeples. And I wouldn't be the least bit afraid; What a stupid thing it is to be people! But I can do one thing—I'll go and wade!

—Youth's Companion.

OUR PERIODICALS:

Table listing various periodicals such as Christian Guardian, Methodist Magazine, and Pleasant Hours, along with their prices and subscription details.

WILLIAM BRIGGS,

Methodist Book and Publishing House, Toronto.

C. W. COVENS, S. P. HURST, 1176 St. Catherine St., West, Montreal, and 1000 Rook Room, Halifax, N.S.

Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, AUGUST 20, 1898.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

AUGUST 28, 1898.

SOME THINGS THE BIBLE FORBIDS. DISRESPECT TO PARENTS.

(Ex. 20. 12; Mark 7. 10-13.)

"Honour thy father and thy mother," wrote the finger of God on the tables of stone, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Our blessed Lord himself set an example of obedience to parents. He was subject to Mary and Joseph, and thus grew in stature and in favour with God and man.

Nothing is more beautiful in this world than to see the mutual love and trust and confidence of parent and child—the tender, protecting love of the father and mother, the cheerful and willing obedience of the children.

There are many reasons for such obedience. The long years of love and care of infancy, childhood, and youth, the anxious thought, the daily toil, the self-denial and self-sacrifice of father and mother for the comfort, the training, the education, the launching in life of their children demand the warmest love and affection that they can return. Yet, sometimes, through thoughtlessness and forgetfulness, the young folk neglect to honour, to love, and to obey their father and their mother.

Few things are more painful than this. "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." God's law pronounces solemn doom against this sin. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." They shall not prosper.

As an undutiful son was driving his old father and mother to the poor-house, his own little boy spoke up and said, "That is what I will do for you when I get big." It is the sign of a cold and cruel heart to be unkind to those who have done so much for us. Whatever faults the Chinese have, they

have the great virtue of being kind to their parents, and even worshipping their ancestors. Perhaps the continuance of their empire through three thousand years or more is, in part, a fulfilment of God's promise that their days shall be long upon the land, who honour their father and mother. Some Indian races of this continent have been very unkind to their parents, and even putting them to death; and the Indian race has almost entirely passed away. May this, then, not be, in part, their punishment for their sin?

THE PARADISE OF BEASTS.

A poor old horse, hitched to a coupe, was sleeping a rainy night before the door of a low restaurant in which women and young fellows were laughing.

And the poor, scraggy plug, with his dejected head, his weak legs, a sorry sight, awaited the pleasure of these night-birds to get back to his miserable, stinking stable.

Half asleep the horse heard the coarse jests of these men and women. He had been for a long time accustomed to them. Even his feeble brain taught him that there is no difference between the squeaking cry of a wheel and the cry of a degraded woman.

And this night he dreamed vaguely that he was again a little colt on a lawn where he used to gambol in the green grass with his mother, who fed him.

All at once he fell stiff, dead, on the sticky pavement.

He came to the door of Paradise. A learned man, who was waiting for St. Peter to open the door, said to the horse.

"What are you doing here? You have no right to enter Paradise. I have the right because I was born of a woman."

And the poor plug answered timidly: "My mother was a gentle mare. She died, old, abused, and I came to find out whether she was here."

Then the door opened, and, lo! the Paradise of animals.

And the old horse knew its mother, who recognized her.

She neighed in joy. And when they were both on the celestial prairie, the horse exulted in finding again the old companions of his misery and seeing their happiness, which would last forever.

There were horses that had drawn huge stones over slippery pavements; that had been beaten violently, that had succumbed under cruel loads; that with blinded eyes had turned ten hours each day the merry-go-round. There were mares that, in the bull-fights and before the eyes of young girls who had looked on with flushed cheeks, had swept the hot sand of the arena with their rent intestines. And there were others, and others.

And now they all took their own gait on the great plain of divine peacefulness.

Other animals were also happy. Cats, mysterious and refined, obeyed only their Creator. They pawed gently at threads with a feeling of inexplicable importance.

Dogs—good mothers—spent their time nursing their young. Fish swam without fear of the angler, birds feared no gun. And so it was with all the animals.

There was no man in this Paradise.

"JUST IN TIME."

BY Z. BOND.

I was quite young when it happened, not more than eight years old, and I am not sure that I was that. We were staying at the seaside for a summer holiday, and I remember that together with my loving, merry brothers and sisters we were having really fine times.

Sometimes we would go out for a race before breakfast. I think I was reckoned to be rather swift on my feet, and I fancy I thought myself smart in that I occasionally managed to reach the goal before my long-legged brothers. Then there were those splendid times on the beach when we would pile up the sand into armories or balls, and make long processions of soldiers or crowds of people out of the shells, which we stuck upright in the sand.

Sometimes strangers would come to ask what we were doing, and this gave us a nice opportunity of describing the meetings that our evangelist father held among the great masses of people in the large cities, and which we imitated on a small scale.

Best of all, there were the evening walks and talks with our beloved mother.

But the incident I thought our young readers would like to hear about especially took place while I was bathing. Now, I was not very brave at facing the boisterous waves of the sea. I could not swim at that time, and it seemed that no persuasion of my brothers and

sisters, who could do that so skillfully, especially with one out-of-sight foot on the sand, could persuade me to leave the rope of safety attached to the bathing machines. But one day, when the colder weather kept many of the bathers from having a dip, and I was comparatively alone, I noticed what seemed to be a piece of sea-wood floating on the top of the water.

At first I saw nothing remarkable about it, and my attention was soon elsewhere. Presently it came into sight again, and something unusual about it made me feel I must go nearer. So wading through the waters to the utmost limit of my rope, and stretching out my other hand, I just managed to catch hold of what I thought was a sea-wood, to find to my horror and unspeakable distress that it was the hair of a human being. Never shall I forget my feelings as I lifted that hair to see the marble-like face that came to the surface of the water. Young as I was, I managed to hold it above the waves while I screamed with all my might for help. I suppose it was really only a few moments before several people came to my assistance, but it seemed to me a very, very long time. A little later, and the poor woman, who was nearly drowned, was taken to the beach. At last she showed signs of returning consciousness, and the doctor said he thought she would live. A carriage was called and she was taken home to her dear ones, who had all been in great distress over the accident.

A few days later my mother took me to see the lady whom I had saved from drowning. I can remember I felt very shy when I went in to see her. She was still sick then, and in bed, but was slowly recovering. After I had been there for some time the door opened, and in rushed a little girl about my age and size, and before I had time to speak to her she threw her arms around my neck and cried, "I will never forget you; I will love you to the last days of my life for saving my mother." I burst into tears. I could not help it. I will never forget it as long as I live.

Barrie, Ont.

WALTER SAVILLE'S EXPERIENCE.

BY REX.

"There is no use trying to be a Christian," declared Walter Saville, "I am just a disgrace to the Christian profession, and I might as well be an out-and-out sinner at once. I have tried for two years to be a Christian, and yet I get angry, and get into scrapes at school, and if I see a sensational novel I can't keep from reading it. I might as well stop trying to do right."

Two years previous Walter Saville had been converted. For a few months all went well, but too soon he had allowed the faults of his nature to sway his actions. He lost his earnest desire to do right. He lost a great deal of his joy in doing right, and he was now almost resolved to give over every attempt to do right.

"If I do that," he continued, "I can make the boys at school afraid to impose on me. I can get into jolly rackets now that I am seated at the back of the school; I will be my own master in all things."

Walter had been largely restrained from doing certain wrong things that he longed to do, and he felt that if he did not profess religion, he could do what he desired to do, unrebuked by conscience.

Yet he was loath to give up every pretence to Christian living. He stifled his regrets, however, and gave himself up to his evil nature. For a week he felt happier and freer; conscience seemed to be dead. He had yet to learn that wrong-doing always brings sorrow.

It was night. Walter was up in the attic. The light burned brilliantly, but the closely-curtained window revealed none of the light. He knew that his occupation must be kept secret from his stern, honest, Christian father. So he had told his father that he was going down the street to his aunt's. Then he slipped upstairs, curtained the window, lit the lamp, and prepared for fun.

He had many of his treasures here, among them a pile of musty old books. One of these he took—a "blood and thunder" novel—and began to read.

The story was graphically written, but it was as worthless, morally and intellectually, as most of those are, whose authors have to sustain interest by "coarse bloodshedding." When an author has not the genius to hold attention by his knowledge of human nature, he often resorts to detective stories, duels, murders, etc., which require mere inventive power, and the faculty of painting those most exciting and degrading scenes of life.

Walter was soon at the highest pitch of excitement, and when he blew out the light and went to bed, he could hardly sleep. At last he fell into a troubled doze, tormented by visions of a wreck of a train, a murder, and an execution. Before very long he awoke. He conjured up the figure of a man in a group of objects faintly seen in the semi-darkness of the room. Of course he was terribly alarmed, and even after groping across the room and finding what the delusion was, trembling with terror at the dread possibilities which he imagined because of the novel he had read.

In the morning he was sleepy and cross. Of course that made him very ill-natured at school. During recess he became involved in a quarrel, which ended in a fight. The school ground echoed with cries of, "A fight! a fight!" and soon a crowd of boys was gathered. A boy was telling a thrilling story to some other boys, but at the first intimation of a fight he was deserted, and his auditors went to view the fight. A boy in the school, working a problem, left it unsolved when the news of the struggle reached his ears, and went to the place of combat.

Don't blame the boys too severely if an instinct of savagery, inherited from our Saxon fathers, "who lived on the pillage of the world," made them love to view the brutal spectacle of a fight.

Well, the fight ended. Walter's enemy, bruised and battered, went sullenly away. Walter was lauded as a victor.

But, oh, the miserable sense of degradation which oppressed him. He who was once known as the boy who never fought, was now on a par with the most brutal and degraded fighter in the school. Walter was utterly ashamed of himself.

Had he been happier since he had given up all effort to do right? At first the sense of freedom to do wrong had stiffened conscience, but afterwards he had been oppressed by guilt, fear and shame. Walter thought of the time when he had tried, to some extent at least, to do right. He had been happier and nobler then. "I would much rather be a Christian," he said. "I am sick of doing wrong." He came back to Christ, and is now a happy, earnest Christian, convinced that virtue alone is happiness below.

SEWING ACHES.

Jessie sat down by her mother to sew. She was making a pillowcase for her own little pillow.

"All this?" she asked in a discontented tone, holding the seam out.

"That is not too much for a little girl who has a work-basket of her own," said her mother.

"Yes," thought Jessie, "mother has given me a work-basket, and I ought to be willing to sew," and with that she took a few stitches quite diligently.

"I have a dreadful pain in my side," said Jessie in a few minutes. "My thumb is very sore," she complained.

"Oh, my hand is so tired!" was the next. Then there was something the matter with her foot and then with her eyes, and so she was full of trouble.

At length the sewing was done. Jessie brought it to her mother.

"Should I not first send for a doctor?" asked her mother.

"The doctor for me, mother?" cried the little girl, as surprised as she could be.

"Certainly; a little girl so full of pains and aches must be ill and the sooner we have the doctor the better."

"Oh, mother," said Jessie, laughing, "they were sewing aches. I am well now."

Two Handles.

There isn't anything in life, But has two handles to it; And if one fails to lift the weight, The other's sure to do it.

Suppose you quarrel with your friend, One handle is, "He's your friend!" But try, "He is my friend!" instead, And faithful love grows strong.

One handle to our daily lives Is, "I and what I need!" How can we hope to lift our load With such a selfish creed?

But say, "My brother!" lend a hand To every fellow-man, And, lo! the strength of all is ours, And what we ought we can.

One handle to our griefs is "Loss!" We cannot bear them so: The other is, "God's will for us, More wide than we can know!"

And when we lift, beneath his smile, The burden he has given, We learn its meaning here on earth, Its full reward in heaven.