

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Vol. XII.]

TORONTO, MAY 28, 1892.

[No. 22.]

LIGHT AND SHADE.

THE picture here needs no explanation. At the top is a young man—fair, bright and hopeful, with life before him, and with the power of choice between good and evil, between light and darkness. The picture shows, on the one side, the different steps in a career which was the result of the former choice, and on the other side the steps following the latter choice. On the right hand, he develops into an earnest, upright young man, fits himself at college for his life work, chooses his profession, business or trade, and fearing God and possessing the respect of his fellowmen, walks on along life's pathway to an honourable and happy old age.

On the left hand, how different! Look at the first step; what a contrast between that face and the one under the mortar-board! Those eyes dare not look you straight in the face. And so he goes on his downward path, for it is so easy to go down hill when a start is made. Every one of those five pictures is worse and more degraded than the one before it; then comes old age—loveless, cheerless age, spent in shadows and the gloom of poverty and sin.

What is at the root of it all? Don't you see it is the Bible that is shedding the light, and the bottle that casts the dark shadow? And it is all in the starting, you see. They were in the same place at first. Be careful of your first step, boys.

A BOY'S DAY DREAM.

It was a bright, warm day in the early summer of 1781, and London was full to overflowing, when a boy about eleven years old, with long, dark hair hanging down his neck and a strange, dreamy, far-off kind of a look in his large, gray eyes, came slowly along one of the busiest streets of the great city, so wrapped up in his own thoughts that he hardly felt the bumps which he encountered in pressing his way through the hurrying throng around him. He must have been thinking of a hard struggle of some kind, for every now and then he darted out both his arms in front of him, to the no small danger of the eyes of the ribs of the passers-by. Suddenly he was brought to a standstill; and no wonder, for, in flourishing his hands about, he had thrust one of them right into the coat-pocket of a tall man who was just going past him.

"What, so young and so wicked?" cried the man, turning around and seizing him. "You little rascal; do you want to pick my pockets in broad daylight?"

"No, I don't want to pick your pockets," said the boy staring about him as if just awakened from a dream; "I thought I was swimming."

"Swimming," echoed the man with a broad laugh. "Well, I've heard a crowd of people called a sea of people, but I have heard of anybody swimming in it



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before. You are either telling me a lie or else you must be crazy."

"I'm not, indeed," protested the boy. "I was thinking of that man who swam across the Hellespont—Leander, you know—and it seemed to me as if I were swimming across it too."

"Oh ho," cried the stranger; "that's it, is it? You seem fond of reading, my friend?"

"I'd read all day long if I could," answered the boy earnestly, "but I've only got a few books, and I've read 'em all again and again."

"Well, I'll tell you what: I belong to a library, and, if you like, I'll give you a ticket of admission to it for six months, and then you can read as much as you

please. Here's my address, and you can come for the ticket as soon as you like;" and the stranger went briskly on his way, little thinking that he would live to see that boy become honoured by all England as one of her greatest poets, and would tell with pride and self-gratification to all his friends how he had once done a kindness to Samuel Taylor Coleridge. — *Harper's Young People.*

It was Richter who said: "I love God and little children." I think that those of us who can sincerely say those words of ourselves need fear no evil thing in this life. — *J. L. Hartman.*

PRAYING FOR APPLES.

"I don't know, grandpa, I've prayed and prayed, and it don't seem to do much good. I've got almost discouraged. And Archie hung his head, and looked downcast enough indeed."

"I wouldn't," said grandpa. "I think apples are going to be plentiful this year."

"What if they are?" asked Archie in surprise.

"Why, I thought you like apples as well as any boy."

"So I do, grandpa, but what in the world have apples to do with a fellow's prayers? 'Tears like none of you can understand how hard it is for a boy to do right, you would not make a light of it if you did."

Grandpa was just about to laugh at Archie's aggrieved tone, but he turned and said to him: "Let me finish what I was going to tell you about apples, and then see if I don't understand more than you think I think apples are going to be plenty, because I just passed Mr. Miller's orchard, and he was out praying for a good crop."

"Not out in the orchard where every one could see him, surely."

"Yes, he was out in the orchard, and I don't think he cared who saw him. He is there yet, I presume, and if you want, you shall go and see him yourself."

Archie was too surprised to answer, but he took his grandpa's hand and went with him.

When they got there they could look over the high fence and see what was going on in the orchard. There was old Mr. Miller following the plow, and turning furrow after furrow of the green sod under, while the boys were hauling manure and spreading it in the furrow.

"I thought you said that Mr. Miller was—"

"Praying for apples? Exactly, he has not had a good crop off the old orchard for several years now, for the sod needed breaking up and the trees enriched by fertilizing. Don't you think that after he has done all he can to make the conditions right for fruit bearing he can go to God and finish his prayer, with the feeling that all now rests with the Lord of the harvest?"

"Finish his prayer?" echoed Archie, in amazement; "if that is finishing his prayer, then I guess I have never begun some of mine."

"May be so, may be so," answered grandpa softly, as though speaking to himself. And then he added: "It would be hard for Squire Miller to pray a good crop of apples on those trees unless he made the soil richer first, eh, Archie?"

"Forgive me, grandpa," answered Archie, "for what I said a minute ago about not understanding how it is for a boy. I was the only one who didn't understand that it was hard, and now you have shown me. I'm going to begin some of my prayers that I finished a long time ago. I'll quit playing with James Barnstone, and read my daisy passages more, and see if I can't get the soul for my resolution a little clearer."