

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XIX.

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 9, 1899.

No 6

Goldenrod.

BY FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.

Spring is the morning of the year.  
And Summer is the noontide bright.  
The Autumn is the evening clear.  
That comes before the Winter's  
night.

And in the evening, everywhere  
Along the roadside, up and down,  
I see the golden torches flare,  
Like lighted street-lamps in the  
town.

I think the butterfly and bee,  
From distant meadows coming back,  
Are quite contented when they see  
These lamps along the homeward  
track.

But those who stay too late get lost;  
For when the darkness falls about,  
Down every lighted street the Frost  
Will go and put the torches out!

## MORE ABOUT VOLOAONES.

The following is an account of the adventures of the Editor-in his ascent of Mount Vesuvius:

The grandest excursion from Naples is that to Mount Vesuvius. In order to avoid the heat, I left Naples with a friend, by carriage, shortly after midnight, and rode through the silent streets of the beautiful city—the tall, white houses gleaming like marble in the glorious moonlight. At many of the corners lamps were burning before the shrines of the Virgin.

Like the red eye of Cyclops burned the dull fire of the mountain. But all day long the mysterious column of white smoke ascends "solemn and slow as erst from Ararat the smoke of the patriarch's sacrifice."

After an hour's drive we reached Resina, a village at the foot of the mountain. Our returning knocked loudly at a door, and we were almost instantly surrounded by a swarm of guides, all anxious to prey upon their victims. I suppose they sleep in their clothes and turn out at a moment's notice. Making a bargain with the chief, we were soon mounted, with the aid of much onerous assistance, on good stout horses. Through the stone-paved streets of the little town we clattered, and soon began to climb the mountain, between luxuriant vineyards and fig and almond orchards growing upon the fertile volcanic soil. Our train was soon increased by four hangers-on, besides the guide. They well deserved the name, in its most literal sense, for they would catch hold of our horses' tails, and so for part of the way we helped them instead of their helping us. At length the road became so steep that horses could no longer climb, and we were forced to dismount. Now the use of the guides whom our horses had dragged up became apparent. It was their turn to



CLIMBING VESUVIUS.

drag us up. One stout fellow tied a leather strap to a stick and gave me the stick, which I held with both hands, while he took the other end of the strap over his shoulder, and another guide pushed me from behind. Between the

two, by scrambling in zig-zags up the mountain's side—the most fatiguing climb I ever had in my life—I at last reached the top and stood on the edge of the crater. The weird grandeur of the sight well

repaid the toll of the ascent. A crumbling ledge of rock ran round the summit, sloping suddenly down to a large, irregular depression which was covered, and floored as it were, with black lava, which had cooled and hardened, retaining the form in which it had boiled up and flowed forth. This floor was studded with a number of smaller cones from which gas and steam were escaping with a violent hissing noise. Among them was one very much larger than the others—the active crater—from which issued the most frightful bellowing. About every two minutes came a violent explosion, and a large quantity of stones and scoria were thrown high in the air, and fell back into the fiery throat of this tremendous furnace. The general appearance of the scene is shown in the small engraving on the next page.

"Do you wish to go down into the crater?" asked our guides.

"Of course we do, that is what we came for," was the answer. Then they haggled for an extra three francs apiece. At length we scrambled down the steep and crumbling wall amid almost suffocating and sulphurous fumes and clambered over the tortured and uneven lava floor. Through numerous cracks and crevices steam and gas were escaping, the rocks were stained yellow, red, and purple with the sulphur incrustations, and I could feel the heat through the thick soles of my boots. In many of the crevices the rock was seen to be red hot, and when I thrust in my staff it suddenly caught fire. Soon one of the guides gave a loud cry, and called us to see the molten lava, which we found boiling up through the black floor, and flowing along in a thick, viscid stream like tar, only of a fiery colour. The heat was great, but I could approach so near as to take some of it on the end of my staff, and press it into my pocket, having first been shown how by the guides. When the lava cooled these were firmly imbedded, and I brought them away as souvenirs of the occasion.

The guide climbed a small cone and broke off the top with his staff. Instantly, with a violent noise, a jet of steam escaped, throwing fragments of rock into the air. I may be imagined I hurried down as fast as possible. I should have liked very much to look down into the active crater, but it was quite unsafe so frequent were the showers of falling stones. My guides offered to take us up for 300 francs. I was mere bravado on their part.

From the summit we had a magnificent view of the distant city and beautiful bay, with the wide sweep of its sickle-shaped shore. After luncheon on the mountain top, part of which consisted of eggs cooked by the natural heat of this great furnace we descended much more rapidly than we went up. All we had to do was to lift our feet well out of the cinders and down we went with tremendous strides. By means of the inclined railway up the cone tourists may now ascend in a very few minutes what cost us weary hours. We remounted our horses and rode down through vast slopes covered with the black lava of recent eruptions, which

(Continued on next page.)



CRATER OF KILAUEA.