

In the Firelight.

BY EUGENE FIELD.

The fire upon the hearth is low,
And there is stillness everywhere,
Like troubled spirits, here and there
The firelight shadows fluttering go.
And as the shadows round me creep
A childish treble breaks the gloom
And softly from a further room
Comes . . . Now I lay me down to sleep . . .

And, somehow, with that little prayer
And that sweet treble in my ears,
My thought goes back to distant years
And lingers with a dear one there;
And as I hear the child's amen,
My mother's faith comes back to me
Crouched at her side I seem to be
And mother holds my hands again

Oh, for an hour in that dear place!
Oh, for the peace of that dear time!
Oh, for that childish trust sublime!
Oh, for a glimpse of mother's face!
Yet, as the shadows round me creep
I do not seem to be alone—
Sweet magic of that treble tone,
And "Now I lay me down to sleep!"

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 5, 1898.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

FEBRUARY 13, 1898.

Listening to Jesus in the boat.—Matt. 13: 1-12.

ALWAYS READY.

The eagerness of the people to hear Christ was proof of his popularity, and his readiness to address them is evidence of the spirit by which he was actuated. He was not fastidious respecting the place of meeting. So long as they would listen he would preach. Our last lesson gave us a view of a service in the mountain. Now we behold a different scene, viz., the Master occupied the deck of a vessel while the people stood on the shore. How sublime the scene!

HIS MODE OF ADDRESS.

Verse 3. He spake many things by parables, that is, by comparisons, or, as Mr. Moody says, by likes. This was a common mode of address in Eastern lands. It is still a most popular mode of address, and doubtless was that which led to the saying, "The common people heard him gladly." He selected this method of address because he knew it was the most suitable. Verses 11, 12.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Verse 4. The people were familiar with the scene here described. They beheld such frequently, and it is more than probable that of those whom he addressed many of them had taken part in such scenes. If you read the lesson carefully through, you will see how many lessons of instruction are taught.

THE SOWER.

Jesus Christ was the sower while he tabernacled on earth. Ministers of the Gospel and Sunday-school teachers are all sowers. Those who speak to others in private or in the social circle on things spiritual and divine, for the time

being are sowers. Parents who advise their children on matters pertaining to their soul's salvation are sowers, who have favourable opportunities of success. The devil is a sower.

THE SEED.

The seed is the Word of God—the precious truths of the Bible. No seed is equal to this for promoting holiness of heart and life. The Bible is the granary which contains the good seed which is to be sown in the heart. No book is equal to it, even good books are only good so far as their contents harmonize with the Bible, therefore the Bible is, of all books, the book which ministers and teachers should study most.

THE HEARERS.

1. Wayside. Fowls of the air gather it up, like those who hear, but allow other things to mix with the good seed, the world in its various forms.

2. Stony ground. Easy pleased, but soon forget, and the first difficulty that arises or the first temptation that crosses their path, or the first taunt that may be given by some former companions throws them aside. They have no depth of earth, they are not steadfast.

3. Among thorns. Worldly cares, love of the world, chokes the seed and prevents its growth. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Deceitfulness of riches.

4. Good ground. They hear the word and keep it. They grow and become fruitful, some larger fruit than others, but all bring forth some fruit. This is what all have a right to do. Circumstances may occur which hinder growth, some seasons may be more favourable than others. Do we bring forth fruit? How much fruit did we produce last year?

A LONG SLEEP.

BY ELLA JACOBS.

One day last winter I stood looking at the snowfall, and watching how the wind tossed the branches of the great allanthus tree. "How cold is it! Surely, nothing can live out of doors," I thought. As I glanced out again, I noticed some little brown balls hanging from the tree. "Surely, those are not dried leaves; but what are they?" I took a long stick, knocked down several of these brownies, —not an easy matter, as each one was held on to the branch by a tough silken thread. They were about the size and shape of a peanut, and they were cocoons. A cocoon is the house which a caterpillar makes for itself to stay in while it is waiting to become a moth or butterfly, and a wonderful house it is! The outside of each of these was made of a dry leaf, all curled up and tucked in. I cut through this leaf, which was like a thin nutshell, and found that the inside of the house was yet more curious, for it was made of soft silk; and in this soft cradle lay a fat little caterpillar, curled up fast asleep.

"I wonder when it will wake?" I hung up my bunch of cocoons near my desk, and every time I went through the long winter I looked at them, but there was no sign of life. One bright May morning, as I went to my office, I thought that summer had almost come, for the trees were full of leaves, and the birds were singing. As I sat down to write, I glanced up at my cocoons.

But, oh, what a surprise! On a picture-frame near by was a large, magnificent moth fully six inches long! It was fanning its wings slowly up and down, drying them, for they were damp. I noticed that one of the cocoons had a tiny hole in the top, and through this the moth, with its wings tightly wrapped around its body, had crept carefully out.

The moth was gray and brown, with lovely spots of red on its wings. In about half an hour, it was quite dry, then it flew around the room a few times, then darted gracefully out of the window, and alighted on the very allanthus tree upon which I had found the cocoons months ago.

I found out that the name of this pretty creature was the Cynthia Moth. The mother lives only a few days, but in that time she lays hundreds of eggs, hiding them carefully in the cracks of the branches of the trees. By-and-bye these eggs are hatched, and out come—no, not beautiful moths, but ugly, fat, wriggling, little caterpillars! As I told you, their mother is dead, so these little babies have to hunt for their own food. But their mother was very wise, she had what in animals we call instinct, so she laid her eggs in a place which was full of just the kind of food that she knew her babies would like. So the little caterpillars crawl up the branches, and eat the leaves of the trees. They are very hungry, and sometimes eat every bit of the leaves except the stem. I think you have all seen trees which have

been destroyed in this manner by caterpillars.

Sometimes these greedy little fellows eat so much that their skin bursts; but a caterpillar is used to this. He just catches on to a twig, and pulls off this old tight dress, and under it there is a nice new one which fits exactly. Isn't that a splendid way of getting new clothes?

After the caterpillars have shed their skins several times in this manner, they get very fat and seem tired, and summer is over. They grow sleepy; so they know it is time to make their little houses in which they must take their long winter nap.

So each one fastens himself by a long thread to a branch, so that "when the wind blows, the cradle will rock." Then he spins a soft, silky blanket. Next, in some wonderful way, he gets a leaf, and covers the outside with it carefully and closely, so the cold air can't get in; then he spins across the top, and the cradle-house is finished; for—yes, when autumn comes again, there are the cocoons hanging from the tree! And the caterpillar is inside, so quiet and motionless it seems lifeless; but we know it is not dead, for in the spring it will come forth a bright, beautiful moth.

How wonderful! yet so much like the lives of people. God has told us that, although the body may be old, ugly, deformed, diseased, yet, if we keep the heart pure and true, that some day it will waken into a new life, where each beautiful soul will enjoy a life everlasting with the heavenly Father.—Sunday-school Times.

SUCH A COMFORT.

"No one to take care of you but this boy?" exclaimed a would-be kind neighbour, as she came into her friend's house and found her ill.

"I would not ask for a better nurse than my Hal," said the mother, with a sort of indignant tone. "People seem to have many erroneous ideas of the capabilities of boys. I don't see but they can make just as good nurses as girls. My Hal is such a comfort!"

"Well, I am surprised!" exclaimed the neighbour, as she saw Hal bring in a waiter covered over with a clean fringed napkin, on it a cup of tea—the prettiest cup and saucer in the house, too, to do the duty of the hour, and a dainty plate of hot toast. Not toast underdone, or overdone, but toast browned exactly right. Had the boy Hal prepared that spread for his mother? Most certainly he had. He served it in such a neat, happy way, too, contriving to get mother, who had but little appetite, to eat every mouthful. How he knocked his fists into the feathers of her fever-heated pillows, and how gently he put them back under the dear mother's head. Then how lovingly he smiled upon her, as she laid her head back on the cool, soft resting-place, and looked at her boy with eyes full of love-light. Soon, with swift feet, he went out of the room to bring back a pitcher of fresh, cold water—for it was almost medicine time—he had the times for the alternate medicines written down so there should be no mistakes. The boys were whistling outside to let their companion know they were going to the ball ground, but it did not have the effect on him that the usual whistle from outside has on a boy within. He did not run and grab his hat, tipping over what happened to be in his way as he went. Sometimes, perhaps, he did, true to his boy nature, but not when mother was ill. He went to the window, shook his head, and waved his hand to the boys, as much as to say: "I hope you will have a good time."

Of course the neighbour went home and talked about Hal, and said it was wonderful what a good nurse he was to his mother. Wonderful, because boys are not thought capable of taking care of the sick. But why not? Is it not a libel on boys to say they are not to be trusted with such sweet ministries: A boy can learn to be gentle in his ways, sympathetic and thoughtful in doing such kindly services for the mother, or others, who are suffering from illness, just as well as a girl. It is only people who do not know boys, who think they cannot do many such sweet, helpful things. Such do not know the rare capabilities of a boy's nature if it is given an opportunity to show of what it is made. So, boys, remember that there is no reason why you should be shut out from all the sweet ministries to those who are ill and suffering, merely because you are boys. Be gentle, loving, sympathetic, go softly about the house, and be thoughtful of the things that are strengthening and soothing; wear a bright, happy face, and your dear mother will say of each one of you, "My boy is such a comfort!"—Evangelist.

BOOK NOTICES.

"Caleb and Becky." By C. R. Parsons. London: Charles H. Kelly. Toronto: William Briggs.

The author of "The Man with the White Hat" always writes with vivacity and instruction. This story has a strong temperance moral. The numerous illustrations add to the interest.

"Treasures of the Snow, and Other Talks to Children." By Rev. Thomas Hind. London: Charles H. Kelly. Toronto: William Briggs.

This is a kind of book of which we wish there were more in our schools. It points out the beauties of nature, the wonders of the snow, of the world of flowers, of fruits, and birds, and the beauties of nature, with their religious teachings. It is beautifully illustrated.

"Fina's First-Fruits, and Other Stories." By Lena Tyack. London: Charles H. Kelly. Toronto: William Briggs.

It is enough to say that these stories had a very wide circulation in the Christmas numbers of The Sunday Magazine to indicate at once their literary merit and religious character. We recommend them for our schools.

"Bernard Gilpin, the Apostle of the North." By the Rev. Henry Bunting. London: Charles H. Kelly. Toronto: William Briggs.

This is a story of a Protestant hero of the days of Queen Mary, of cruel memory, who, after many adventures, survived her bitter persecution.

"Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, in Words of One Syllable." With numerous illustrations by Frederick Barnard and others, and water-colour reproductions. Toronto: William Briggs. Price, boards, \$1; cloth, \$1.50.

This immortal story is in a very special sense a book for boys and girls. They will read with eagerness the adventures of Christian, his fights with giants, his many trials and triumphs, but especially will they delight in the story of Christiana and her children, and how they all got safe over the river to the heavenly city. This story is here told in short and simple words, with numerous full-page pictures.

Bunyan was a Puritan of the Puritans, and we have no doubt that he had in mind as his heroes the valiant Ironsides and Roundheads of his party, and as the enemies of righteousness the persecuting Cavaliers. Many of the illustrations of this book catch the very idea and give us old Puritan and Cavalier portraits of the characters in this book. We know no better birthday or holiday present than this child's Pilgrim's Progress.

"Those Three." By May Lewis Smith. London: Charles H. Kelly. Toronto: William Briggs. 12mo.

"Those Three" were bright, beautiful children, whose portraits are given us. They were real children, and this is a true story. It will delight the little folks with its large type and full-page cuts.

"The Prince of the Pin Elves." By Charles Lee Sleigh. Illustrated by Amy M. Sacker. Boston: L. C. Page & Co. Toronto: William Briggs. Price, 50 cents.

The old-fashioned fairy tale will never lose its interest with the children. To their imagination nothing is impossible in the transformation and wonders. This book explains where all the pins go. The clever story and numerous pictures will delight the little folk.

"Practical Hints." For young writers, readers, and book buyers. By Frederic Lawrence Knowles. Boston: L. C. Page & Co. Toronto: William Briggs. Price, 50 cents.

This small book is one of the very best that we know for young writers. It is full of helps, hints, and suggestions that will be simply invaluable in writing for the press and forming connections of books.

"Ole Mammy's Torment." By Annie Fellows Johnston. Illustrated by Mary G. Johnston and Amy M. Sacker. Boston: L. C. Page & Co. Toronto: William Briggs. Price, 50 cents.

The writer of this book thoroughly understands Southern life and character. Her sketches of the coloured uncles and aunts and the little black pickaninnies are to the very life.