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# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XVII.]

TORONTO, JANUARY 2, 1897.

No. 1.

## Do What You Can.

"We cannot all be heroes,  
And thrill a hemisphere  
With some great daring venture,  
Some deed that mocks at fear;  
But we can fill a lifetime  
With kindly acts and true;  
There's always noble service  
For noble hearts to do.

"We cannot all be preachers,  
And sway with voice and pen,  
As strong winds sway the forest,  
The minds and hearts of men;  
But we can be evangelists  
To souls within our reach;  
There's always Love's own gospel  
For living hearts to preach.

"We cannot all be martyrs,  
And win a deathless name  
By some Divine baptism,  
Some ministry of flame;  
But we can live for truth's sake,  
Can do for Christ and dare;  
There's always faithful witness  
For faithful hearts to bear."

## THE SNOW PLOUGH.

BY THE EDITOR.

One of the largest and most interesting exhibits at Chicago was that representing the development of the railway locomotive. There were "Puffing Billy" and the "Rocket," two of the earliest English locomotives, and the queer little engines with a wood-rack and a barrel of water for tender drawing after them two or three stage coaches on railway trucks. At the other end of the gamut was the splendid new engine, No. 999, which had drawn a train from New York to Chicago, part of the way at the rate of one hundred and twelve miles and a half per hour, a bright polished, seemingly sentient-looking thing with driving-wheels over seven feet high.

The Pullman and other vestibule trains were like a hotel on wheels. The parlour and dining-room cars were fitted up in most elaborate luxury. There were also library, writing-room, bath-room, and barber shop, lighted and heated by electricity, with the most complete arrangements for comfort and luxury that can be imagined.

I saw also locomotives with a couple of erect cylinders on either side, the pistons of which actuated cogged gear-wheels which turned the drivers, enabling a comparatively light and small engine to haul a heavy load at the rate of twenty miles an hour up a steep mountain grade.

I also saw a couple of tremendous snow-ploughs, one like that in our picture, the other with great rotary screws that bored into the snow-drifts and tossed the snow a hundred feet away from the track.

One of the greatest enemies railways have to contend with is the snow blizzard. A few years ago, every road in the country as far south as Washington was greatly impeded, and some trains were stopped for days; traffic was almost entirely interrupted, and New York and other great cities were in a state of siege.

Near Toronto, at another time, a train was stalled three days in the snow within five miles of the city. Nor is this difficulty confined to Canada. In Central Europe, especially among the mountain railways, similar obstruction occurs, and even in the North of England trains have been so buried in the snow that only the funnel of the engine was visible.

The snow-plough, however, so largely used in Canada, will force its way through almost any obstruction, especially when backed up by half a dozen engines, as shown in our cut. In making a winter journey through New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to catch the mail steamer at Halifax, our train repeatedly ran into snow-drifts at night. I could feel the dull thud as the solid drifts stopped the train and then the engine backed a bit and went at it again and forced its way through all obstructions. These difficulties entail heavy expense on railways, especially when the telegraph service becomes demoralized through the breaking of the wires.

There is something titanic in the conflict between the ingenuity of man and the brute forces of nature. Half a dozen engine-drivers and as many firemen, with a few pounds of coal and pails of water to engender steam, a few iron and steel wheels and cylinders, will attack with the accumulated force of a thousand

## CHARLIE'S BLIND BIRD.

When Charlie Manning was about three years old, his grandmother sent him a canary. It was only a few months old, but it had already begun to sing, and was one of the prettiest little birds you ever saw. When Charlie watched it jump from the tiny little cage in which it had travelled from St. Leonard's to London, he was quite silent for a few minutes, then he jumped up and called out: "Nurse, nurse, come quick! Dickie's got a cap like you."

The fact was that the canary had what is called a crest on his head, which made him look different from any other canary that the little boy had seen.

Charlie's mother wanted him to learn to think for others instead of himself, so she went into the nursery every morning before breakfast to give Dickie clean sand and fresh seed and water. Of course Charlie wanted to help, and she always let him do it, though I am afraid that at first he put more sand on the floor than in the cage. As to the water, he spilled half that too; but as the nursery had floor cloth instead of carpet, he could easily wipe that up. So Charlie grew to be very fond of his canary, and never forgot to feed it and give it a bath.

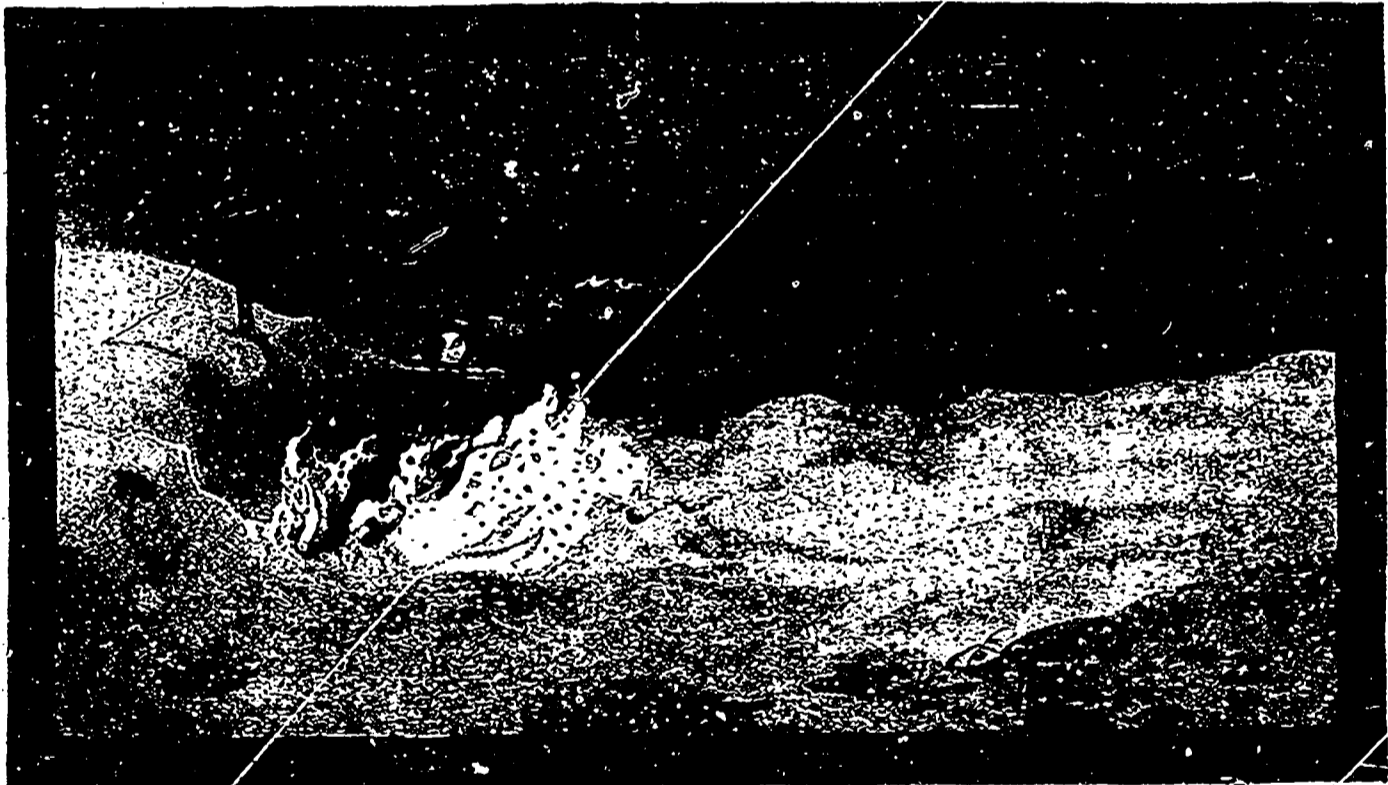
One day, about a year after the bird arrived, Charlie went to his mother in

There is one thing more I should like to tell you, and that is how Charlie's little blind Dickie did good to his master. Charlie is getting to be a big boy now, and goes to school every day. He was very miserable at first. But one day when he had been studying hard in the garden, and grumbling a good deal, he heard Dickie singing. He took his book to the window sill, and, looking up at the canary, he said: "Yes, you have learned how to make the best of a bad job. So will I. I won't grumble any more, but just do my work as well as I can and as fast as I can."

## WHY BIRDS GO TO THE ARCTIC REGIONS.

The number of birds that go to the Arctic regions to breed is "vast beyond conception." They go, not by thousands, but by millions, to rear their young on the tundra. The cause which attracts them is because nowhere in the world does nature provide at the same time and in the same place "such a lavish prodigality of food." That the barren swamp of the tundra should yield a food-supply so great as to tempt birds to make journeys of thousands of miles to rear their young in a land of plenty only to be found beyond the Arctic

Circle, seems incredible. The vegetation largely consists of cranberry, cloud-berry, and crow-berry bushes. Forced by the perpetual sunshine of the Arctic summer, these bear enormous crops of fruit. But the crop is not ripe until the middle and end of the Arctic summer, and if the fruit-eating birds had to wait until it was ripe they would starve, for they arrive on the very day of the melting of the snow. But each year the snow descends on this immense crop of ripe food before the birds have had time to gather it. It is then preserved beneath the snow, perfectly fresh and pure, and the melting of the snow discloses the bushes with



THE SNOW PLOUGH.

horses, a solid snow embankment and make everything go before them.

These tremendous drifts are an illustration of the accumulative force of many littles. A snowflake is the lightest, most fragile, downiest thing in the world. Under the microscope it reveals the loveliest formation of star crystals. Little by little they sift down, seeming soft as carded wool. But trampled by the feet of the storm they become almost as hard as adamant.

So the tiny grains of sand, so small and light that they can hardly be weighed by the chemist's scales, will drift across the Southern railways and present a still worse obstacle than the snow in the north. Washed up by the waves they make great banks at sea on which many a good ship has been pounded to pieces.

So, too, the little things of life, the snow-flakes and sand grains of habit, will build up an almost impassable barrier to intellectual and spiritual progress. "Obsta principiis," says the Latin proverb—"Resist the beginnings." We need to guard well the seemingly trivial things of life lest they forge fetters for the soul which only the power of Omnipotence can break.

great distress. "Mother," he said, "I believe that Dickie is ill, and, do you know, he has something the matter with his eye."

Mrs. Manning went upstairs directly, and found the poor bird looking very sadly indeed; but, what was worse still, she saw that one eye was gone. Charlie and his mother went off at once for the bird doctor, but when he looked at the poor canary he said that he could do no good. The bird must have injured his eye with one of the little wire hooks in the cage. But it was sadder still to hear that he was afraid the sight of the other eye would go too. And so it did, before two months were over, and the little canary was very sad and miserable at first, and seemed afraid to move from one little spot on one particular perch. Then Charlie was more tender and careful than ever not to frighten his poor bird, and his own eyes filled with tears as he looked at his little blind pet.

But by-and-bye the canary got over his sorrow, and began singing more beautifully than ever. Then he had courage to take a few hops about the cage; and now, if you went into the nursery you would never believe that it was a blind bird which was hanging in the window.

the unconsumed last year's crop hanging on them, or lying, ready to be eaten, on the ground. The frozen meal stretches across the breadth of Asia. It never decays, and is accessible the moment the snow melts. Ages have taught the birds that they have only to fly to the Arctic Circle to find such a store of "crystallized foods" as will last them till the bushes are once more forced into bearing by the perpetual sunlight. The same heats which free the fruits bring into being the most prolific insect life in the world; the mosquito swarms on the tundra. No European can live there without a veil after the snow melts; the gun-barrels are black with them, and the cloud often obscures the sight. Thus the insect-eating birds have only to open their mouths to fill them with mosquitoes, and the presence of swarms of tender little warblers, of cliff chaffs, pipits, and wagtails, in this Arctic region is accounted for.

An old lady in Texas says she never could imagine where all the Smiths came from until she saw in a town a large sign, "Smith Manufacturing Company."

## At School.

We are all at school in this world of ours,  
And our lessons lie plain before us;  
But we will not learn, and the flying  
hours  
And the days and the years pass o'er us.

And then we grumble and mourn and say  
That our school is so tiresome and  
weary.

And we ask for a long, bright holiday,  
That will banish our lessons dreary.

But what is it God is trying to teach?  
Is it patience or faith or kindness?  
Is the lesson really beyond our reach  
Or made hard through our wilful blind-  
ness?

If we were in earnest and tried to learn—  
If our listless study we mended—  
Who knows but our holiday we would  
earn  
And our schooldays be gladly ended?

Who knows but we make our lessons  
long  
And hinder their meaning from reach-  
ing  
The hearts that would be full of joyous  
song.

If we knew what our God was teaching?

Then let us study his will while we may:  
There's a warning for us in the rule  
That the scholars who will not learn all  
day

Are the ones that are kept after school.

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## Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, JANUARY 2, 1897.

## HEAVEN BOUND.

The train was going west, and the time was evening. At a station a little girl about eight years old came aboard carrying a little budget under her arm. She came into a car and deliberately took a seat. She then commenced an eager scrutiny of faces, but all were strange to her. She appeared weary, and, placing her budget for a pillow, prepared to try to get a little sleep. Soon the conductor came along collecting tickets and fares. Observing him, she asked if she might lie there. The gentlemanly conductor replied that she might, when the following conversation took place. Said the conductor: "Where are you going?"

She answered: "I am going to heaven."

He asked again: "Who pays your fare?"

She then said: "Mister, does this railroad lead to heaven, and does Jesus travel on it?"

He said: "I think not. Why did you think so?"

"Why, sir, before my ma died she used to sing of Jesus on the heavenly railroad, and he pays the fare for everybody, and the train stopped at every station to take people on board; but my ma don't sing to me any more. Nobody sings to me now, and I thought that I would take the car and go to ma. Mister, do you sing to your little girl about heaven; you've a little girl, haven't you?"

He replied: "No, my little dear, I have no little girl now. I had one once, but she died some time ago, and went to heaven."

Again she asked: "Did she go over this railroad; and are you going to see her now?"

By this time every person in the coach was upon his feet, and most of them were weeping. An attempt to describe what I witnessed is almost futile. Some said: "God bless the dear little girl!"

Hearing some person say that she was an angel, the little girl earnestly replied: "Yes, my ma used to say that I would be an angel some time." Addressing herself to the conductor, she asked him: "Do you love Jesus? I do, and if you love him he will let you ride on his railroad. I am going to heaven, and I wish that you would go with me. I know that Jesus will let me in when I get there, and will let you in too, and everybody who rides on his railroad—yes, all these people. Wouldn't you like to see heaven and Jesus and your little girl?" These words, so innocently and pathetically uttered, brought a rush of tears to all eyes, but most profusely from the eyes of the conductor. Some who were travelling on the heavenly road shouted aloud for joy. She now asked the conductor: "Mister, may I lie here until we get to heaven?"

He replied: "Yes, dear, yes."

"Will you wake me up then, so that I can see my ma, your little girl, and Jesus? for I do want to see them all."

The answer came in broken accents, but in words tenderly spoken: "Yes, dear angel, yes. God bless you!"

"Amen!" was sobbed by more than a score of voices.

Turning her eyes again upon the conductor, the child interrogated him again: "What shall I tell your little girl when I see her? Shall I tell her that I saw her pa on Jesus' railroad? Shall I?"

This brought fresh floods of tears from all present, and the conductor knelt by her side, and, embracing her, wept the reply that he could not utter. At this juncture the brakeman called out: "H—s." The conductor arose and requested him to attend to his (the conductor's) duty at the station, for he was engaged. That was a precious place. I thank God that I witnessed this scene, but I was sorry that at this point I had to leave the train.

## THE USE OF BURRS.

After a stroll afield, in the fall, one is apt to wonder, as he works away at the burrs that cover his clothes, what use they can possibly be. Burrs are a great nuisance to men and animals; but the plants they grow on find them very serviceable, for they are simply fruits covered with spines or prickles; and this is only another way plants have to distribute their seeds. That it is a scheme that works well any one can see who has a hunting-dog, and keeps it in his yard. In the spring fine crops of Spanish needles and clot-burrs come up as if by magic, where there were none before. They have grown from the burrs the dog brought home in his coat the autumn before. Around woollen mills in New England, plants from the west spring up in a mysterious way, and nearly always these have burr-fruits. They have grown from the burrs taken from the fleeces of sheep, in cleaning, and thrown out as waste. Some troublesome weeds have been introduced in this manner. On the prairies there are many plants with this kind of fruit. In former days, when great herds of buffalo roamed the plains, their hair caught up these burrs, which thus stole long rides, like the tramps they are. Even now, in old buffalo-wallows, plants are found that do not grow elsewhere in the country round.

Some burrs, like Spanish needles, have only three or four slender spines, or awns, as they are called, at the summit of the fruit. If we look at them through a magnifying-glass, we find them bearing sharp, downward-pointing barbs, like that of a fish-hook. The sand-spur, an ill weed that grows on sea-beaches, and sandy-river banks, has burrs covered with such spines. The boy who has stepped on sand-spurs with his bare feet knows this to his sorrow. The tiny barbs go in easily, but every attempt to draw them out make them tear into the flesh.

Often the spines or bristles are hooked instead of being barbed. The clet-burr, or cockle-burr, that grows abundantly in waste ground, and the agrimony of our woods, are examples. Burdock has such hooked prickles on its fruits, and they stick so fast together, that children make of them neat little baskets, handles and all. The tick-trefoil has jointed pods, covered thickly with small hooked hairs that can hardly be seen without a magnifying-glass. These are the small flat, brown burrs that cover the clothing after a walk through the woods in September. They are most annoying burrs, worse than clot-burrs, they are so small and tick so fast.—November St. Nicholas.

## THE IMMENSE SIZE OF THE SUN.

TO JOURNEY ACROSS IT BY TRAIN WOULD TAKE TWO YEARS AND A HALF.

The sun, provided we measure only the disk seen with the smoked glass, is eight hundred and sixty-six thousand miles in diameter, i.e., one hundred and eight earths could be comfortably ranged side by side across the disk. To cover the surface would require many thousands. To fill the interior we should need one million three hundred thousand. On a smaller scale we might represent the sun by a ball two feet in diameter and the earth by a good-sized grain of shot. Let the sun be hollowed out, then place the earth at its centre, and let the moon revolve about it at its real distance of two hundred and forty thousand miles. There would yet remain nearly two hundred thousand miles of space between the moon's orbit and the inclosing shell of the sun. Indeed, to journey from one side of the sun to the other, through the centre, would take one of our swift express trains nearly two years and a half. So vast a globe must be heavy. Since its density is only one-quarter that of the earth, it only weighs as much as three hundred and thirty-two thousand earths, or two octillions of tons! The attraction of gravity on its surface would cause a man whose weight was one hundred and fifty pounds to weigh two tons.—Alden W. Quimby, in Ladies' Home Journal.

## WINGED SEEDS.

THE WIND PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE SPREADING OF PLANTS.

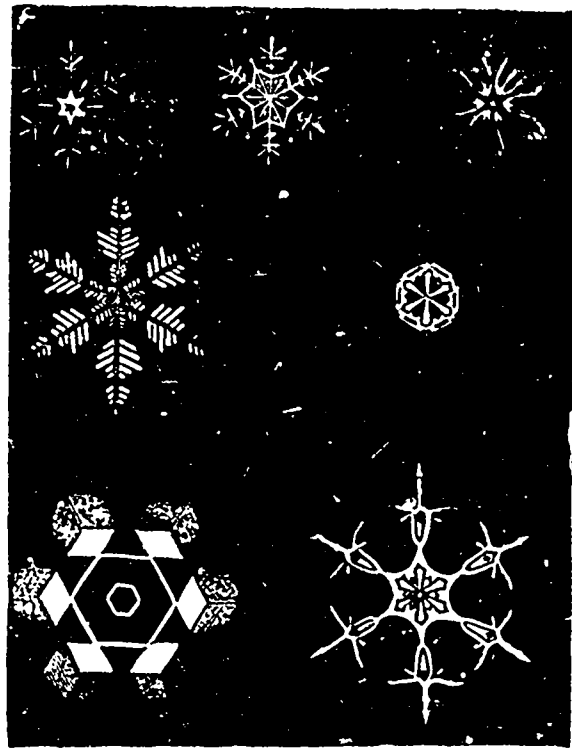
The usual way for seeds to be carried is by the wind. Sometimes they are so small and light as to be easily wafted by the breezes. This is the case of the seed of the moccasin-flowers and meadow-pinks, and the other beautiful plants of our woods and bogs called orchids. And the tiny bodies, like atoms of dust, termed "spores," that answer to seed in ferns and mosses and toadstools, are borne away by the lightest breath of air. But most seeds are themselves too heavy for this. So they are oftentimes provided with thin, broad wings that carry them before the wind as a sail carries a boat. The pairs of "keys" that hang in clusters from the maple-trees in spring are such winged fruits. When ripe they float slowly to the ground, or if a high wind is blowing, they are carried farther from the tree. The ash has thick bunches of winged fruits much like these, but single. The elm has a thin, papery border all around its small seeds, which makes them quite conspicuous as they hang on the branchlets before the leaves have come out.

Numbers of plants have about the seeds delicate hairs or bristles that take the place of wings. A dandelion "clock," or a head of thistle-down, is a bunch of seeds, each with a circle of fine bristles on the summit. When the seeds are ripe, along comes a breeze, and puff! away go the seeds, hanging from their tufts of bristles, as the basket hangs from a balloon. The bunches of long silky hairs that come from a bursting pod of milk-weed, and fill the air around, have each their precious cargo in the shape of a small, brown seed. The seeds that ripen in heads on the clematis, after the handsome purple flower-leaves have fallen, have long feathered tails, like slender bird-plumes, that do the same work that is given to the silk of milkweed. The "cotton" around the seeds of the willows at the riverside and of the poplars along city streets serves the same useful purpose. Cotton itself is only a bunch of fine white hair around the seed. Ages before men thought of spinning it, and weaving it into cloth, it was making itself useful to the cotton-plant by helping to scatter its seed.—"How Plants Spread," in November St. Nicholas.

When we have a keen eye for the faults of others, we are apt to be blind to our own.

A right state of heart cannot be maintained, without keeping a close watch on the tongue.

It ought to be a matter of principle with the Christian to praise the Lord, whether he feels like it or not.

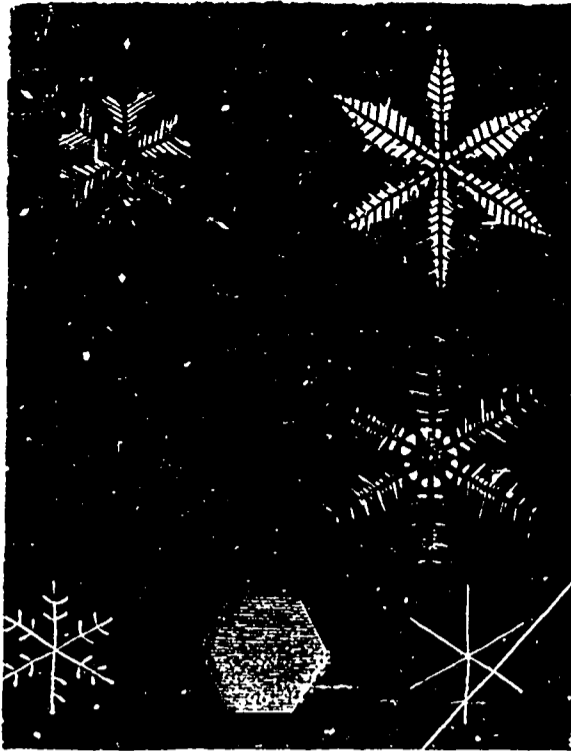


## SNOW FLOWERS.

Snow is composed of great numbers of very small ice-crystals! Hence snow is crystallized ice. If you look at snow-flakes with the naked eye they all look nearly alike, and have no special interest or beauty except their purity and whiteness. But look again at them, and this time through a strong microscope. Behold, what beautiful forms! They surpass diamonds in their exquisite shapes, and almost equal them in the brilliant flashing of the light. There are perfectly-formed crystals, appearing in a great variety of shapes. How delicately the fine angles are shaped! How unlike each succeeding form seems! But look again for the third time. Behold, there is a likeness one to the other. This one has six points; that one has the same number. Some look like six broad leaves held by their stems and forming a circular flower; others seem to be three prisms laid across each other to form a six-pointed star. Still others have the form of six cubic crystals attached by their corners to a six-sided plate or crystal. Then there are the most tiny and delicate crystal-like leaves, some pinnate, some lanceolate like a spear-head; others have fine spear-like stems, six of them joined at the centre and feathered at their sides. "How beautiful!" you exclaim. Oh, yes, you are just beginning to learn what snow is. Professor Tyndall calls a snow-storm a "shower of frozen flowers." Some of these flowers are nearly an inch wide, but usually they are much smaller. Perhaps the smaller ones are more beautiful than the larger ones.

Dr. Scoresby made a very careful study of snow-crystals while he was in the arctic regions. He discovered and made drawings of nearly one hundred different forms of these crystal flowers. He divided them into three classes. The first he called "lamellar;" that is, they were composed of thin plates, layers, or scales. The second class he called "spicular;" that is, they had points like a dart. The third class he called "pyramidal," because they were built up apparently like a pyramid, having six sides. Professor Green, Mr. Glaisher, and Professor Tyndall have given much attention to these beautiful crystals of snow, and Mr. Glaisher discovered that the primary figure of each crystal was a star having six points, or it was a hexagonal or six-sided scale or plate. The compound figures were of very great variety. The illustrations given herewith are from Mr. Glaisher's drawings. There were curious combinations of darts, prisms, cubes, rhomboids,—that is, oblique-angled parallelograms,—all arranged around a central figure in the most artistic and wonderful manner. No florist or artist ever made a more beautifully arranged bouquet than is to be found in these complex snow-crystals, made in the laboratory of the skies, and presided over by the Creator of all things. Professor Tyndall says "snow-crystals formed in calm atmosphere are built up on the same type." The little atoms of snow arrange themselves so as to form six-pointed stars. Then from the central nucleus, or point, there shoot out six spiculae, or darts. Every two of these rays or darts are separated by an angle of exactly sixty degrees. From these long darts smaller darts shoot out, and these too are separated from each other by exactly the same angle as are the longer ones. And from these shorter darts still others spring out at their side.





SNOW FLOWERS.

and these also keep at the same angle from each other as did each in the other larger and longer arms. With unerring certainty and with the greatest mathematical accuracy these minute atoms of snow arrange themselves into these crystals, always at the same angle, yet presenting an almost endless variety of combinations.

"The force of gravitation is a very simple affair," says Professor Tyndall, "compared to the forces which bring matter into crystals in this marvellously unerring and exquisite manner." And he thoughtfully and eloquently adds, "It is worth pausing to think what wonderful work is going on in the atmosphere during the formation and descent of every snow-shower. What building power is brought into play! And how imperfect seem the productions of human minds and hands when compared with these formed by the blind forces of nature! But who ventures to call the forces of nature blind? . . . The blindness is ours; and what we really ought to say and confess is that our powers are absolutely unable to comprehend either the origin or the end of the operations of nature."

Ah, there, this great man shows his weakness! If he had studied the Bible with half the zeal and care that he has science, he would not have written that last sentence. The devout Bible-reader, even the smallest child in our Sunday-schools, could teach this man, so learned in the wisdom of this world, that God is the author and origin of nature and of all things, and that the "end of all these operations" is to show forth to the universe the wisdom, beneficence, and glory of the Creator.

Snow is mentioned about twenty-five times in the Bible. It is not as common to see snow in the lands where the books of the Bible were written as in our country. The leprosy of Miriam and of Gehazi was compared to snow (Num. 12. 10; 2 Kings 5. 27). The purity of him whom the Lord washes is likened to it (Psalm 51. 7; Isa. 1. 18); and the raiment of Christ at his transformation is said to have been white as snow (Matt. 28. 3; Mark 9. 3).

Sir Humphrey Davy saw a machine in Germany which compressed air under a column of water two hundred and sixty feet high. When the stop-cock was opened allowing air to escape, it was discovered that under this immense pressure all the vapour in the compressed air had been frozen, and flew out from the tube as a shower of snow. The pipe from which the air escaped was also heard with fine icicles.

The whiteness of the snow is due to the reflection of the light from the faces of these minute crystals. Ice when ground fine takes on a similar whiteness. Ice is formed in still water, such as you find on a lake, into six-pointed crystals, closely resembling the crystals of snow. When the ice is ground these minute crystals appear, reflecting the light and turning into a white colour. And so in winter, as in summer, this wonderful world of ours is covered with the most delicately formed flowers; and it would be difficult to prove that the winter blossoms which come to us in such plentiful snow-storms—"showers of flowers"—are less beautiful than those which spring from the earth. Both are made by the same infinite Hand that shaped the worlds around us.

POETRY OF THE NEW YEAR.

THE OLD GOING OUT AND THE NEW COMING IN.

The New Year! What a poem in the very words! Beneath the many-hued arch of its fancies the past and the present unite, and the future beckons onward. What a flood of years have swept along the channel of time since the heart of man first sighed to the regular of a dying year—first hailed the new guest at the door! Down through the corridors of centuries, flooded with the music of the human heart, deep as the diapasons of eternity, we touch the tragedy of the New Year—its joys, its sorrows, its tears, its laughter, its heart-beats of memory, its rainbow of love, its flowers, and its snow. To many it is the twilight of morn; to many it is the shadow of eve—the bud that flowers—the star that shines but yields no light—the purpose without the fruitage.

At the altar of the New Year, lit up with bright tapers of the past and the smiling horizon of the future, the soul kneels in loving homage—a vassal to the sceptre of memory, a captive bound to the chariot wheels of hope. Since last we touched the threshold of the New Year, life has sung its way into each bud and found expression in the tonic sol-fa of the grove. The cypress sky has swept the sere leaf, psalm-like, to its grave; and every tree, in mantle white, with bowed head, murmurs a prayer for the departed dead. It seems but yesterday we welcomed with kindly word and friendly cheer the year we have entombed:

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

How swift they go,  
Life's many years,  
With their winds of woe  
And their storms of tears,  
And their darkest of nights, whose shadowy slopes  
Are lit with the flashes of starriest hopes,  
And their sunshiny days, in whose calm heaven loom  
The clouds of the tempest—the shadows of gloom!

And ah! we pray,  
With a grief so drear,  
That the years may stay  
When their graves are near;  
Tho' the brows of to-morrow be radiant and bright,  
With love and with beauty, with life and with light,  
The dead hearts of yesterday, cold on the bier,  
To the hearts that survive them are evermore dear.

For the heart so true  
To each old year cleaves;  
Tho' the hand of the New  
Flowery garlands weaves.  
But the flowers of the future, tho' fragrant and fair,  
With the past's withered leaflets may never compare;  
For dear is each dead leaf, and dearer each thorn,  
In the wreaths which the brows of our past years have worn.

Yea! men will cling  
With a love to the last,  
And wildly fling  
Their arms round their past,  
As the vine that clings to the oak that falls,  
As the ivy twines round the crumbled walls;  
For the dust of the past some hearts higher prize  
Than the stars that flash out from the future's bright skies.

And why not so?  
The old, old years,  
They knew and they know  
All our hopes and fears;  
We walked by their side, and we told them each grief,  
And they kissed off our tears while they whispered relief;  
And the stories of hearts that may not be revealed,  
In the hearts of the dead years are buried and sealed.

Let the New Year sing  
At the Old Year's grave;

Will the New Year bring  
What the Old Year gave?  
Ah! the Stranger-Year trips over the snows,  
And his brow is wreathed with many a rose;  
But how many thorns do the roses conceal  
Which the roses, when withered, shall so soon reveal?

Let the New Year smile  
When the Old Year dies;  
In how short a while  
Shall the smiles be sighs?  
Yea! Stranger-Year, thou hast many a charm,  
And thy face is fair and thy greeting warm;  
But, dearer than thou—in his shroud of snows—  
Is the furrowed face of the year that goes.

Yea, bright New Year,  
O'er all the earth,  
With song and cheer,  
They will hail thy birth;  
They will trust thy words in a single hour,  
They will love thy face, they will laud thy power;  
For the new has charms which the old has not,  
And the stranger's face makes the friend's forgot.

Not so with the New Year. Its smiles may cheer our hearts and for a moment enthrall our thoughts, but the mirror of the past brings back the faces we loved of yore. Yea, we hear once more the pulse-beat of friendship's kindly heart; for the memory of love is deeper than the grave—it is an immortality stretching from earth to heaven—a Jacob's ladder, upon which ascend and descend bright cherubims of affection, whose stainless robes are woven in the loom of purest love. Standing in the vestibule of a New Year, my soul surveys the shores that accent the ocean of the past—the struggling swimmer, cast up by the cruel wave upon a pitiless rock—the white sail, bearing its cargo triumphant to the shore—the floating spar, that writes upon the waters its epic tale of woe.

Oh, friends of happy boyhood, whose memories are sweet to me as the breath of morning flowers! Ye whose feet have paced the metre of life's poem, and fell before the poetic moment of noontide had writ your names upon the scroll of fame! Ye dreamers of a summer glory, whose honoured hours ne'er brought the fruitage of an autumn-day! Ye I salute! I sit beside the Old Year. His pulse is slow, for plumed death stands waiting at the door:

DEATH AND LIFE.

Upon his couch the Old Year lay,  
Death pressed his brow and hand,  
A pilgrim year in mantle white  
Was dreaming in the land;  
Life's anxious heart stood mourning by,  
And dropt a pitying tear  
Upon the cold and snowy shroud  
That wrapt the dear Old Year.

O Father Time! O archer swift!  
Thy arrows are but days  
Shot through the sky that spans our life,  
Some fleck'd with golden rays—  
Some clad in raiment dark and drear  
That know no earthly light,  
The sunshine of whose joys and hopes  
Are quenched in sorrow's night.

A happy, jolly, good Old Year!  
We'll miss thy heart and hand;  
We knew thy form, we knew thy face,  
Thy smile hath cheered the land.  
Within thy folded arms we've dreamt,  
With hopeful prayers and fears,  
But now, alas! kind, good Old Year,  
We bury thee with tears.

The friends that gathered round thy knee  
We'll meet, alas! no more;  
They've left the household of our days,  
And closed the iron door.  
Life beams anew—with other light  
We seek our path to find;  
Nor seek in vain, with torch in hand,  
The path we left behind.

Another year hath robbed itself  
And started on its way;  
With staff of hope and raiment bright  
It ushers in the day.  
The bells are ringing thro' the land,  
All hearts are filled with cheer;  
"The Old is dead!"—"Long live the New!"  
The glad, the bright New Year!

Ring in the joys of happy home,  
The mirth, the love, the glee;  
Ring in sweet peace to all mankind,  
Ring till all hearts are free.  
O cherub year! O white-robed child!  
Baptized in hope above;  
We pray thee bless with heavenly smile,  
The hearts and homes we love!

THE TRAIN BOY.

He had done several little errands for the gentleman in the Pullman car, and as the man got off he slipped a dollar into his hand.

"I like your looks, Jimmie," he said kindly. "Now, remember that you can make yourself whatever you wish. I don't mean by that that you may become a Vanderbilt, if you desire, or be President of the United States; but I do mean that you can be something better yet—a Christian man. Don't forget that."

It was ten years later before the two men met again. Then Jimmie had just been made conductor on an important road, and in one of the passengers he recognized his old-time friend. The gentleman had changed but little in the ten years just passed, but it was hard to persuade him that the fine-looking young conductor was the ragged train boy of whom he still retained a faint remembrance.

"But I certainly am he," Jimmie asserted energetically, "and I've always wanted to tell you how much your words and your kindness did for me. I'd been getting into low company, and growing sort o' wild and reckless; but your words just haunted me, and I got to wondering if that kind of thing paid. I concluded that I'd rather grow up a Christian man, as you said, than a drunken loafer; so I just stopped short and commenced over in dead earnest."

"And that was all the result of a few sentences forgotten as soon as uttered," said the gentleman thoughtfully. "It just shows what a mighty power for weal or woe our chance words may be, and how we ought to guard them"—Classmate.

JUNIOR EPWORTH LEAGUE.

PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

JANUARY 10, 1897.

The childhood of John the Baptist.—Luke 1. 80.

A NOTABLE MAN.

This whole chapter is replete with interest. The events preceding the birth of the Baptist are such as can only be designated most wonderful. Zacharias, his father, was a priest, but he was dumb for some time before the birth of his son. Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, was cousin to Mary, the mother of Jesus. John was the forerunner of Jesus, and was designated in prophecy as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

HIS DUTIES.

The "forerunner" was one who went before royalty to prepare the way for the coming of royalty. Thus John Baptist went before Christ, and proclaimed his coming, and preached, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Isaiah prophesied of John Baptist, and all his predictions received a marvellous fulfillment. Read the prophecies as found in Isaiah 40, and compare them with the life of the Baptist as recorded in the Gospels, and you will see the truth of this statement.

HIS MANNER OF LIFE.

Verse 80. He was strong in spirit, his strength increased with his years, and was thus being fitted for the duties which would shortly devolve upon him. His home was not one of luxury. He lived in a wilderness, that is, a country not remarkable for its fertility, where the art of man had not been brought into use. The air was pure, the food of the plainest description, all which were calculated to develop a rugged character, or one who could endure hardship.

ENTERING UPON HIS DUTIES.

"Till the day of his showing unto Israel." In the olden times priests were not initiated into office until they were thirty years of age. This is what is meant by the phrase now under consideration. All these years he was undergoing the necessary preparation. God would have no servant of his engage in holy duties until he had been prepared. No doubt the time would be well spent by John in meditation and prayer.

Should not this teach the church an important lesson? Whatever office any of us may be called to fill, we should seek to obtain the best qualification possible for the office, and study to become a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.

Sho—"The man I marry must be only a little lower than the angels."  
He (suddenly flopping)—"Here I am on my knees, a little lower than one of them."  
He got her

## A Song of Snow Time.

Sing a song of snow-time  
Now it's passing by,  
Million little fleecy flakes  
Falling from the sky,  
When the ground is covered,  
And the hedge and trees,  
There will be a gay time  
For the chickadees.

Boys are in the school-house,  
Drawing on their slates,  
Pictures of the coasting-place,  
And thinking of their skates;  
Girls are nodding knowingly,  
Smilingly about,  
Thinking of a gay time  
When the school is out.

Three o'clock, four o'clock,  
Bang! goes the bell;  
Get your hats and cloaks and wraps,  
Hurry off, pell-mell!  
Bring along the coasters all,  
If you want some fun;  
Up to the hill-top,  
Jump and slide and run!

Steady now! Ready now!  
Each in his place!  
Here we go, there we go,  
Down on a race!  
Sing a song of snow-time,  
When the flakes fall,  
Coast-time, skate-time,  
Best time of all!

## LESSON NOTES.

LESSON II.—JANUARY 10.  
THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN.

Acts 2, 1-13. Study also verses 14-31.  
GOLDEN TEXT.

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.—Acts 2, 4.

Time.—Our Lord's final appearance and his ascension are usually dated on Thursday, May 18, A.D. 30. The Holy Spirit was given ten days later—on Sunday, May 28, A.D. 30, as we believe. Concerning the Feast of Pentecost, see note on verse 1.

Place.—An "upper room" in Jerusalem; probably the same in which the last passover was eaten, and which seems to have continued a Christian headquarters. It was very likely recognized as one of the "Galilean synagogues." Here it was that, divinely guided, they had chosen Matthias to be the twelfth apostle in the place of Judas. The Christians were now "about one hundred and twenty in number," men and women, whose great business it had become to wait in earnest, united prayer for the gift of power. At the hours of morning and evening sacrifice they were habitually at the temple, but the upper room was their place of supplication for the Comforter.

The Gift of Tongues.—Great misconception prevails respecting these "other tongues." The common idea is that the apostles needed a miraculous power of understanding and speaking foreign languages, in order to be able to preach the Gospel to all nations; that this power was given at Pentecost, and was afterward used by them; and that they did actually preach the Gospel in various dialects to the assembled crowds on the day of Pentecost. But observe—

1. No such power was needed. True, if any of the apostles went to very remote lands—India, for instance—then the power would be useful, and it may have been bestowed. But of this there is no Scripture evidence. In all the countries which we read of as visited by Paul or others, Greek was generally understood; and the wide spread of this language is justly regarded as one way in which God prepared the world for the Gospel. Of course the various languages existed, but they were not necessary to intercourse.

2. In the Acts we never afterwards find the apostles using a foreign language. And the Epistles are all written in Greek.

3. Our chapter does not say that the apostles preached in foreign tongues to the crowd. It was not preaching, but praise (compare verse 11 with chapter 10, 46) and it began before the crowds came together. When the amazed people began to question and to mock, Peter stood up and addressed them, and he spoke in Greek, which they all understood. What, then, was the gift of tongues? It was an inspiration, not unlike those prophetic impulses we read of in the Old Testament. The apostles did on the day of Pentecost speak intelligibly in actual languages, and their words were understood by those who knew the languages; but it is not implied that a permanent knowledge of any foreign tongue was given, of which they could avail themselves at pleasure; they only spoke as the Spirit "gave them

utterance." The power, very likely, recurred on other occasions, but it was not one to be used at the will of the individual. It was given afterward to converts at various places who had no special commission to go to distant lands to preach the Gospel, as at Caesarea, Ephesus, Corinth. See Acts 10, 46; 19, 6; 1 Cor. 12 and 14. At Corinth those so inspired spoke not to men, but to God; not edifying their brethren, for they could not understand them, but edifying themselves by the utterance in any way of their hearts' feelings. Hence prophesying, or preaching, was a nobler gift, because it was understood, and so edified the church. See 1 Cor. 14, 2-4, 18, 19, 39. Then what was the use of the gift of tongues? See 1 Cor. 14, 22; it was "a sign to those who believed not." It answered a purpose similar to that of miracles; it compelled attention, and made men feel that "this was the finger of God," and so it opened the way for the preaching of the Gospel.

## THE PORCUPINE.

The best known species is the Canada porcupine, about two and a half feet long, weighing from twenty to thirty pounds. It is an excellent, though a slow climber; it is not able to escape its enemies by flight, but cannot be attacked even by the largest carnivora with impunity; dogs, wolves, the lynx, and the cougar have been known to die from the inflammation produced by its quills; these are loosely attached to the skin and barbed at the point, so that they easily penetrate, retain their hold, and tend continually to become more deeply inserted; when irritated it erects its quills, and by a quick lateral movement of the tail strikes its enemy, leaving the nose, mouth, and tongue beset with its darts; it has no power of shooting the quills.



THE PORCUPINE.

The food consists of vegetable substances, especially the inner bark and tender twigs of the elm, basswood, and hemlock, it seldom quits a tree while the bark is unaten, except in cold weather, when it descends to sleep in a hollow stump or cave; as it kills the trees which it ascends, its depredations are often serious. It is often erroneously called hedgehog in New England. The nest is made in a hollow tree, and the young, generally two, are born in April or May. It is almost as large as a beaver, and is eagerly hunted by the Indians, who eat the flesh, and use the quills for ornament, often dyeing them with bright colours; it is very tenacious of life; it does not hibernate, as the European porcupine is said to do. This animal shows admirably that the quills are only modified hairs, as it presents quills on the back, spiny hairs on the sides, and coarse, bristly hairs on the under surface, passing into each other in regular gradation.

The crested or common porcupine is found in Southern Europe, where it has come from Northern and West Africa; it is about twenty-eight inches long, and tail about eight inches more; the muzzle is large and obtuse, sparingly clothed with small dusky hairs, with scattered longer and coarser ones on the upper lip; anterior and under parts and limbs, with spines not more than two inches long, with which are mixed some coarse hairs; crest of numerous, very long bristles, extending from the crown to the back, sixteen inches long, and curving backward; hind parts of the body and tail covered with quills, some slender and flexible, twelve to sixteen inches long, others shorter, stouter, and very sharp; a few on the tip of the tail are hollow, generally open and truncated at the end, and supported on a very slender stalk, about half an inch long. The prevailing colour is brownish black, with a white band on the fore part of the neck. This is the porcupine of the French, the spiny pig, so called from its heavy pig-tail look and

its grunting voice. It lives in rocky crevices or in burrows, becoming torpid in winter; the food consists of various vegetable substances, and its flesh is well flavoured; it can erect its quills at pleasure, but cannot discharge them, besides its grunts, it makes a rattling noise by shaking the tuft of hollow quills on the tail.

## UNCLE JOE'S NEW YEAR'S LETTER.

Dear Boys and Girls,—The old year is past and gone forever, and a new year has dawned upon us. We are just that much older, and we are a step nearer the grave. The old year may have been for us one of pleasure and prosperity, and again it may have been one of sorrow and failure. It is but right, then, we should devote ourselves to serious meditation and perform that duty which is incumbent upon us, to examine into our lives and daily affairs, and see under which category we can place ourselves. Having examined everything carefully, we find it has been a year of happiness and prosperity, we owe a debt of gratitude to the Giver of all good things, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Gratitude compels us to do this, and hence we must give serious attention. Should we fall in thanking God, who has been so good to us, can we expect he will favour us during this new year.

You may have had great success in your studies; on account of good health, you were enabled to attend school every day. Your parents have had success in life, and, in a word, your whole family has been blessed in every manner. Upon you devolves the strict duty of thanking God for his many favours. You know not what the new year may bring to you, and hence you should ask God that it may be as successful as the past. Possibly the dying year had been one of sor-

row and complete failure. Ah, then I say to you, look to it well and see if you were to blame. Locate the cause and make the correction. Did you do your duty to God? Have you been faithful in every respect? If so, accept the cross in humble submission. Has it been your fault? Then ask God's pardon and promise to do better in the future.

Whilst this is a day of happiness, it is also a time when well meaning people will give themselves to serious consideration. Many have passed away during the last year whom we knew well, and it may be that we shall be among those selected during the year to render our account to God. Let us remember now is the acceptable time, and hence take those resolutions which present themselves and will be the means of rendering us more perfect during the new year. Your old uncle thanks God for another year that is gone, and asks for another year to be added to his life that he may continue to tell his little ones those things so necessary for a successful life. God grant you may see many more years, and in your prayers remember your old uncle. "A Happy New Year to all!"—Uncle Joe.

"Oh, Maud, I've something to tell you. You know how I've longed to go to Paris; and now I'm going with father. It's so jolly." "Isn't this rather sudden, Ethel?" "Yes; but you see he's been bitten by a mad dog, and there is no time for him to lose in getting to the Pasteur Hospital."

Editor's Wife.—"Oh, John, the baby has swallowed a button!" Editor.—"Well, let's hope it won't hurt the poor little chap; but should it happen to kill him, what a splendid alliterative headline it will make—"A Baby Bolts a Button and Becomes Breathless!" Editor's Wife.—"Oh, you brute!"

## Another Year.

Another year is fading  
Into the shadowy past,  
What if for me, my Saviour,  
This year should be the last?  
Could I, with joy recalling  
The hours and moments gone,  
Say I had well employed them,  
Nor o'er one failure mourn?

Another year is passing,  
And I am passing too—  
Passing from earth and earthly scenes  
To those earth never know.  
What shall I plead when standing  
Before the "Great White Throne?"  
Nothing, O Christ, but thine own blood,  
Thy righteousness mine own.

Another year is dying,  
And time is dying, too—  
And all things here below, with him,  
Are passing out of view.  
Passing as swiftly as our thoughts,  
Flit through our minds, then flee  
Oh, realizing facts like these,  
What ought our lives to be?

Another year is adding  
To those already dead.  
Dead! will they never rise again?  
Where, all the actions fled?  
We surely yet shall meet again,  
This old year and our souls:  
His deeds will greet us yet, though now  
Oblivion o'er him rolls.

We leave the year with Jesus  
To sprinkle with his blood:  
Jesus, the Loving One, who once  
As our sin-bearer stood.  
We leave the year with Jesus,  
And thus the weight is gone,  
We trust the future all to him  
Who all its weight hath borne.

## "JESUS, IT'S ME."

At a religious meeting in the south of London, a timid little girl wanted to be prayed for; she wanted to come to Jesus, and said to the gentleman conducting the meeting, "Will you pray for me in the meeting, please, but do not mention my name?"

In the meeting which followed, when every head was bowed, and there was silence, the gentleman prayed for the little girl who wanted to come to Jesus, and he said, "O Lord, there is a little girl who does not want her name to be known, but thou dost know her; save her precious soul!"

There was a perfect silence, and away in the back of the meeting a little girl rose, and a little voice said, "Please, it's me, Jesus; it is me!"

She did not want to have a doubt. She meant it. She wanted to be saved and she was not ashamed to rise in that meeting, little girl as she was, and say, "Jesus, it's me."

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