

Sunday Reading.

HANDS OFF.

Instances Where the Warning is Quite Necessary.

In museums and fine or rare collections may often be seen the printed warning, 'Do Not Handle,' or, 'Not to be Touched.' At fairs and private sales for charity one sometimes sees the still more curt placard, 'Hands Off!'

Now why are such warnings necessary? Simply because many persons are born meddlers. They see with their fingers. They are not thoughtful. They have no respect for other people's property.

Some years ago a gentleman was presented with a fine crayon portrait. The work was well done, but its chief value lay in the fact that it was a good likeness of one of his family. He was so proud and pleased with it that even before it was glassed and framed, he had it tacked against the wall, and called a chance visitor into his library to see what a gift had just been made to him.

'Ah, that's fine!' said the friend with cordial appreciation. 'But see, here, it'll rub, won't it?'

Yes, it would! Before the owner could interfere, the thoughtless admirer had passed a broad forefinger across the beautifully shaded portrait, and a dreadful smudge ruined it past all remedy. What a pity he had not learned when a boy to keep his 'hands off!'

The other day we were invited, a favored few of us, into an antiquarian's 'den.' The owner said he 'did not let folks in there very often.' Most people are not content to let him be the showman. In that room were old, old books, with queer bright-colored plates; chairs that had belonged to college presidents and other presidents; fragments of famous wrecks; a hundred curious things. The one that held my eyes (because it fitted right into this little talk about 'meddling') was a great bow of some strong, hard wood, bound and lined with bear-sinews. It was an old Californian relic, and you boys would have liked to see it and hear him tell the bear-story that belonged to it. But, alas, it was broken!

'A man came in here one day and wanted to test the strength of those bear-sinews,' said the old man regretfully. 'He tried it across his knee. Knee was pretty strong, I guess. Anyway the bow couldn't stand it!'

Learn to see with your eyes, children. A good many doors will fly open to you easily if you are that sort of a sight-seer.

GLAD TO HELP.

The Kindly Act of a Clergyman Towards a Poor Woman.

It is a pleasant thought that many of the men whom the world delights to honor are proud and glad to do the little, humble, helpful services, for which opportunity comes to us all. An incident told of a beloved minister and worker who has passed from this life is a good illustration.

Dr. G., accompanied by a friend, was one day hindered on a crowded street corner. Near them stood an old, feeble, poorly-dressed woman, evidently in nervous terror at all thought of attempting the dangerous crossing. Noticing her distress Dr. G. in his beautiful, gracious way, drew her trembling arm within his strong one and carefully piloted her over.

On returning he was met by the query on the part of a friend:

'That was one of your flock, I suppose?'

'No,' was the answer, 'I never saw her before. But she was in need of help, and I was glad to give it.'

If we have within our hearts the same spirit, if we are glad to give help whenever and wherever we can, we can make our lives beautiful through the doing of such small services as this, the chances for which come to us all.

A THANK-OFFERING FROM AFAR.

It is a Thankful Spirit that is Still Grateful Amid all Trials.

'The Missionary Herald' tells of a recent gift to the American Board of Foreign Missions, which has a most interesting history behind it.

The gift is from an Armenian Christian of Marsovan Turkey. The donor had proposed, on reaching his fiftieth year, to make a thank offering of £50, in view of the prosperity that God had granted him. But in that year the massacres came, and for hours this man's life hung by but a single thread. The mob sought for him by name in the very spot where he had been employed two minutes before the storm broke. A moment later, and he would have been locked out of the stone building in which he found shelter. Much of his property was lost, and he doubted whether he could get together enough to

pay his debts, but he fared better than he had hoped, and some property remained. Now he proposes to make good his former donation. In carrying out this purpose he divided the £50 into six portions, giving one to the American Board, as a thank offering for the good work it has done, and another portion to the American Bible Society, in remembrance that a Bible of its publication came into his hands in his childhood, and for the blessings that had come to him by reason of its teachings. Mr. White, of Marsovan, in forwarding the gift, says, 'The donor does not wish his name known, for he is a quiet man, diligent and honest in business, serving the Lord.'

It is indeed a thankful spirit that in the midst of such trials can still look with trustful gratitude to the Father. A faith less strongly grounded might have been shaken and in the clouds of sorrow and danger have lost sight of Divine love. May our faith be equally strong, and may we, through all trials, have in our hearts that love for our heavenly Father which is the best thank offering we can bring.

THE GUNPOWDER SEARCH.

How the Guy Fawkes Plot Was Discovered and the Precautions Since.

It is nearly three hundred years since the British House of Parliament were searched and the barrels of gunpowder under the custody of Guy Fawkes, a soldier of fortune, was discovered a few hours before the opening of the session. The gunpowder plot was not exposed by vigilance, but by means of a letter written by one of the conspirators to a relative, warning him against attending Parliament on the first day. If there was lack of official vigilance then, there has been none since, for Parliament has not been opened any year for three centuries until the cellars have been searched. The lord chamberlain of the court is charged with the duty of examining the vaults and secret passages, but ordinarily it is the vice-chamberlain who conducts the search. With him are associated the deputy sergeant-at-arms of the house of commons, the clerk of the board of works and an inspector of police. These four officials are preceded by four yeoman of the guard in uniform and fully armed. They tramp through one corridor after another, and look into every dark corner, and finally reach an agreement that no gunpowder has been secretly stored in the cellars, and that it is safe for Parliament to meet.

When the earliest searches were ordered during the reign of King James I., the guardsmen carried lanterns through the dark passages. The corridors and underground rooms are now flooded with electric light, but the yeoman of the guard respect the old custom and have lanterns in their hands. Under the Stuarts it was customary, when the inspection had been finished, for the head chamberlain to send a message to the sovereign by a mounted soldier with the information that it would be entirely safe for him to attend the opening session of Parliament.

The mounted soldier no longer rides post-haste to the queen at Windsor or Osborne; but every year the vice-chamberlain sends the traditional message to her by private wire, and she is assured that there are no explosives in the cellars, and that she will not be exposed to unusual risks if she chooses to meet her Lords and Commons. She may not have the remotest intention of opening Parliament, but the message is received and acknowledged. The lanterns are swung in the full glare of the electric light by the yeomen of the guard because the plot of the first Guy Fawkes was unmasked by lamplight, and it is the impressive and stately method of looking for conspirators.

The mounted messenger has been dispensed with, and the message is entrusted to the wires. This is the only concession made to modern progress. Otherwise the traditions of three centuries are respected in detail whenever this strange and interesting function is repeated.

Enough for One.

Rapturous Youth—Darling, my salary is \$50 a week. Do you think you could live on that?

His Affiliated—Why, yes, George, I can get along on that. But what'll you live on?

A BATTLE WITH WOLVES.

By a Thrifty German Housewife, who Saved her Sheep.

Last autumn a German settler in the wilderness not far from the headwaters of the Mississippi River, Otto Gewehrman by name, came into the land office at Grand Rapids, Minnesota, to 'prove up' his claim. He also brought with him three wolf-scalps, and demanded the bounty on them.

'Did you kill these?' he asked.

'No,' said the German, 'my woman kill him mit an axe.'

He showed the places in the skins where they had been lacerated by many blows with a sharp implement, and told how the skins came to his hand.

Gewehrman had a wife and children, and also a flock of sheep. Wolves had formerly troubled him a good deal, for his claim is in a wild part of Itasca County. In September last he left his eldest boy, twelve years old, accompanied by an old sheepdog, to guard the sheep in a piece of grassy woodland near the house. The boy was armed with an old gun load with buckshot.

The father, in going away from home on a necessary errand, apprehended no trouble, for the wolves had not been seen all summer, and he imagined that they had at last left the neighborhood.

The boy seems to have had no fear of trouble either, for while the sheep were quietly grazing, he wandered away from them a little distance, looking for something to shoot. The dog stayed with the sheep.

Before long the boy heard a great commotion and fierce yelping in the direction of the glade where the sheep were left, and presently saw the sheep come running in terror through the woods toward him. He hurried on toward the place from which the noise came, and there found the old dog in a deadly struggle with three full-grown wolves. A fourth wolf was engaged in tearing the body of a sheep he had killed.

The boy fired at the wolf which was tearing the sheep, and it ran limping away. However, the shot, and the cries of the wounded wolf, brought the three other wolves upon him; they left the half dead dog, and flew at the boy.

The youngster, having no other charge in his gun, climbed a tree with agility and presence of mind. Then he began to yell for help. The house was within no great distance, and the boy's mother heard the shouts. There were other sounds which spoke to her of wild animals; and seizing an axe, she ran as fast as she could to the place.

She reached the tree. Whether or not the boy was safe in it did not appear to have entered her thoughts; she saw simply that he was threatened by the wild beast, and without any deliberation she attacked them. They turned upon her and fought hard. But a woman struggling in defence of her children is no mean antagonist under any circumstances, and this woman had a formidable weapon in a sharp axe. Her greatest danger was that the wolves were three in number, and attacked her from all sides.

She was too quick for them, however, and in a few moments she had laid them all out on the ground, dead. Then she helped the boy down out of the tree, and got him into a place of undoubted safety. Then, like the thrifty German woman that she was, she proceeded to skin the wolves while they were warm and skinnable, in order that there should be no doubt about getting the bounty that the state pays for the destruction of such wild animals.

SANTA CLAUS WAS A REAL MAN.

The 'Truly-True' St. Nick and the Legends of His Life.

Some grown-ups and older children imagine there never was any real Santa Claus; but they ought to know better. Nicholas, the patron saint of Christmas-tide, was a bishop of the church in Asia Minor, where he died in 343. His bones were removed to Bari, Italy, in 1307, where they now rest, under the crypt of the church which bears his name.

A writer in Chamber's 'Book of Days' interestingly describes the celebration of St. Nicholas day at Bari. On that day, the town is thronged with pilgrims from all the country round. When they reach the church they show their devotion by walking around it—if it can be called walking—on their knees, and some of them even do it with their foreheads to the floor, each being guided by a child, who leads the pilgrim with a handkerchief of which he holds in his mouth. Each pilgrim is

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entitled to a meal without cost, and on the especial occasion described over nine thousand were fed. Water comes up through the floor of the crypt over the grave of St. Nicholas, and this is supposed to have great curative powers. It is gathered in sponges, squeezed into bottles and sold to the pilgrims. It is called the manna of St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas was the patron saint of children, of virgins and of sailors, and countless stories have come down to us of his tender and constant protection of those under his care.

The observance of St. Nicholas day which connects it with Christmas customs of the present era is the ancient one of filling shoes with little gifts which were supposed to have been left there by the saint, says the 'Monthly Illustrator.' It was also the custom of old in certain convents for the boarders to leave each a silk stocking at the door of the abbess on the eve of St. Nicholas, and these they would find in the morning filled with sweetmeats or other trifles to show that they were held in remembrance.

Children were told that St. Nicholas threw the presents for them in at the window, and the main point is clear enough—that he is the same person who, as Santa Claus, rides on Christmas eve all over every part of the world where good children live, with his sledge and his reindeer, and comes down the chimneys to fill the stockings hung up to await him with all sorts of things to delight childish hearts, somewhere far up in the Arctic circle, making toys and boiling sugar into candy to distribute the next Christmas.

OFFENDED DIGNITY.

The Dog's pride was Wounded and He Sulked.

A clear case of sulks on the part of a much petted and overindulged dog, is reported in the Christian work. The more carefully dogs are studied, the more of what is called 'human nature' is found in them.

A dog who had grown old and gray in one family, and had always been used to much kindness, became at last so fat that when the dinner-bell rang—a sound which used to bring him rushing down stairs—he would sit at the top of the staircase, and whine piteously until some one went up and carried him down.

Just at this time a Newfoundland puppy was introduced into the family, much to the chagrin of the old terrier, who would not make friends with the new comer.

On one occasion when the dinner-bell rang, the puppy, seeing the old dog sitting on the top step as usual, ran up to him, and in clumsy play upset him so completely that the fat fellow rolled to the foot of the stairs. The sight was very ludicrous, and several members of the family could not refrain from laughter.

The pampered dog's behaviour was curious. Gathering himself together, he refused to enter the dining-room, but slowly toiled up stairs again and retired to the wicker basket where he usually passed the night. Humble apologies were made to him, more than one child offering him dainty food, but though he must have been hungry everything was refused, and he passed the evening fasting.

His pride had been too deeply wounded by the unfeeling laughter of his friends, and it was not until another day that he seemed to forgive the slight.

Military Justice.

Old Judge Dole, an early settler of Pike, in the county of Wyoming. New York, was a military man in his early days, having, to quote his own words, 'fit the Britishers' in the War of 1812. And he carried his habits of military discipline into the management of his farm.

One hot summer day his hired men, five or six in number, decided to take a nap after their luncheon of doughnuts and pie, instead of setting to work again at hay-making. They selected one of their number, to act as sentinel and keep watch for the old judge, and the rest of them stretched themselves at full length in the shade of a big tree.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, the sentinel yielded to the desire for slumber, and at the end of ten minutes was fast asleep at his post.

Just five minutes later the judge appeared, to see how the work was going on, and he saw at once the state of affairs. From the sentinel's position the judge knew what duty the man had been expected to perform and without waiting for any explanation, he proceeded to administer a sound drubbing with his stick.

When he had sufficiently admonished the sentinel, the old judge let him go, saying, 'There, I guess that'll learn you not to sleep on your post! And without taking the least notice of the other sleepers, the disciplinarian marched off, perfectly satisfied.

Gentle Courtesy.

Lady Camilla Gordon, in her memories of Suffolk, tells a true story of a society woman who was sweet-natured and generous enough to give the poor of her very best. She used to visit the large, dreary workhouse in the manufacturing town near her country home. For this, she dressed herself carefully in her best clothes, and wore all her brightest jewels. 'For', said Gertrude, simply, 'poor people care much more to see one in one's best things than rich people do. I wonder why everybody generally puts on common, dull old clothes to visit cottages!'

One night, we went together to a party, my pretty Gertrude dressed in every color of the rainbow, with diamonds sparkling on her wavy hair and shining about her soft, round throat. As we alighted from our carriage, the Prince and Princess of Wales happened to arrive, and we stood aside on the steps to let them pass. As usual, there was a crowd of people waiting to enter the house. A poor woman, just behind us, was vainly endeavoring to lift her child, a little cripple, so that he might see the princess; but each time that she pressed forward, a policeman pushed her back. The child broke into a wail:

'Oh, I can't see her! I can't see her! You promised I should see her, mammy!'

Gertrude turned quickly. 'Give me your little boy,' she said, and she took the astonished child in her arms. 'I will hold him up. He can have a much better view here.'

With a queenly gesture, she waved aside the bewildered policeman. The little cripple put his tiny, wasted arms trustfully about her neck, and leaned eagerly forward to see all that was to be seen; and when the sight was over, and Gertrude gently disentangled herself from his poor little hands, to give him back to his mother, the child put his pale lips to her rosy cheek and kissed her.

'Pretty lady! pretty lady!' he said, admiringly.

His mother broke into a torrent of thanks and apologies, while Gertrude, gathering up her brilliant train, passed into the house.

After a Chinese Wedding.

On the day following a Chinese wedding, at least in certain provinces, the bride's youngest brother goes to inquire after her and to take a present from her mother of a bottle of hair oil. This is a custom so ancient that none know the origin thereof. No further communications take place between the bride and her family for three months, when her mother sends a sedan chair and an invitation to visit her. If there has been neither a birth nor a death in her husband's or in her mother's house for 100 days she goes and makes a short stay at her old home. This visit over, she cannot see her mother again until after her first child is born, and not then, should the child be a girl. Even then, if there has been a death in either family the visit cannot be made, and there have been many instances where a mother and daughter living very near each other have not met for years.

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