

Teachers' Department.

Sabbath School Scripture Lessons.

DECEMBER 7th, 1856.

Subject.—MATTHIAS CHOSEN TO THE APOSTLESHIP.
For Repeating. For Reading.
Acts i. 1-5. | Acts i. 15-26.

DECEMBER 14th, 1856.

Subject.—THE DAY OF PENTECOST.
For Repeating. For Reading.
Acts i. 15-20. | Acts ii. 1-13.

For the Christian Messenger.

Rupert Rudolph's Letters to his Cousin.
[No. 5.]

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Time passes with wonderful celerity, and it seems almost incredible that so long a period has elapsed since last I wrote you.

Dismissing exordiums, I will proceed at once to my subject, in which I shall endeavour to set forth the possibility there is for us to "make something" if we try. A review of the past, a glance at the biography of renowned individuals, proves the superiority, in many instances, of self-education. FRANKLIN, the distinguished American of the eighteenth century, was the son of a tallow-chandler,—an humble tradesman,—and finally a renowned philosopher, a brilliant statesman, and mingled in the most refined circles in Europe. He had few advantages of education, inherited nothing but an honorable name, yet left for his heirs a considerable fortune, accumulated by his own frugality and exertions.

SIR HUMPHRY DAVY, the great chemist, too well known to demand a "biography" here, was the son of an humble carver in Penzance, and wholly through his own efforts, won for himself the imperishable name that future generations were destined to bestow.

JAMES FERGUSON, the Scotch astronomer learned to read and write without a teacher, and mastered the elements of his favorite science, while acting in the capacity of a shepherd's boy, while alone with his flocks by night.

SHAKESPEARE, the immortal poet, "the glory of the English language" was born in a small provincial town, about ninety miles distant from London. His father was a dealer in wool, but from losses in trade, was reduced to a state of extreme poverty.

I might fill my sheet with the names alone, of those who have arisen by their own efforts, from obscurity, to the broad gleam of the sunshine of fame. But it is unnecessary. We can all read their lives and their deeds, and let their example serve to stimulate onward "to noble ends and aims." I am not endeavouring to impress the idea that this was achieved without effort, and vigorous effort. We may want knowledge, and "desire it greatly," but if we make no effort to obtain it, we need not expect to enjoy it. I would not have you think they were every-day men, we have been considering; they were men that would have succeeded had they undertaken any branch of industry. It would have been a branch of industry to whatever they applied. "Onward," was the watchword they followed. Fail was never a part of their language; energy and perseverance were the talismans of their success. And if we follow their track; if we pursue the same course with the same industry, time may also see us something more than mere plebeians.

Some one has said "there is room higher up," but let our aspirations be so, that there can be no higher.

When Lord Nelson first went to sea, his father told him to be a good boy, and he would be a captain in a few years. The young admiral replied: "If I did not expect to be an admiral I would not go at all." His aspirations were high, yet, we doubt, he more than realized them.

The present is the period for action—the time for us to choose the part we are to act in the great drama of life. If we must be benders of timber, and tillers of the soil, we may be the best even in that capacity. But we need not continue in either of these occupations. There will be abundance left for them if we choose some loftier pursuit.

Because some may boast of money and riches, it need not follow that we must be their servants. When we enter public worship, we need be under no apprehensions from that "young gentleman," who in order to exhibit his Parisian cane, and patent morroccos endeavours to monopolise more than the necessary space.

The masters of which we have most to avoid are vice and folly. Break the chains which bind us in their despotic bondage and we need fear nought from haughty men. Numbers who have yielded to the guiled charms of pleasure, have

at length relinquished their fondest hopes and happiness at its treacherous shrine; as the stately oak suffers its trunk to be bound by the alluring embraces of the clinging ivy, while its barked fissures become supports for thousands of its deadly tendrils, and at last yields its life to the pestiferous clasp which it can never shake off.

A great picture is to be painted—the canvass is prepared—the colors are mingled. The great Artist is ready to commence his work. He is only waiting to observe the proper situation, which the figures design to occupy. He is watching carefully their peculiar movements, and each will be carefully exhibited in the picture. You and I, young friend, are both to be represented impartially in this great representation. Now, we must choose the position we would occupy. He will not wait our indecision, or hesitation. Other figures are to come forward and stand in the fore-ground, and then we must stand in the shade.

We all think of the Future; have some anticipations of manhood and busy life. Are our aspirations the highest and noblest, or are we to be content with mediocre attainments? Time is rapidly filling up the picture, in which we are destined to stand; no individual will be omitted. Are we to stand forth in some noble enterprise worthy of a philanthropist, or are we to remain unknown and useless in dark obscurity. ASPIRE to noble objects; follow your aspirations with energy and discretion,—persevere till the goal is attained, the victory won.

The mind, like pure gold, the more it is worn and rubbed, the more sparkling its brilliancy. Improve the leisure moments which are as gold dust, and their worth collectively estimated, who can tell? Apply the fragments of precious time,—which far too many consume with the noxious weed, or lounging in the village store, or—still worse—at the dram shop,—to study; useful and entertaining reading, &c.

If you have never yet loved study, will you not during these fine long pleasant winter evenings which are approaching, make an effort to fasten your mind upon something useful. Get some good books, your slate, and all proper apparatus, and by diligent application to them,—if, when the winter snows disappear, and the vernal sun calls into existence the green grass and sweet flowers and singing birds, with all Spring's concomitant beauties,—you do not think more, love more, see more, and know more; just inform me, and I will acknowledge that I was decidedly mistaken. Please make the attempt and you will render yourself happy, and afford delight to

Your affectionate Cousin,

RUPERT RUDOLPH.

Beech Hill, Nov. 17, '56.

Blind Robert.

A STORY FOR LITTLE BOYS.

One day I met a little boy in the street, who was going along very slowly, feeling his way by the houses and the fences; and I knew that he was blind. If he had had eyes to see with, he would have been running and jumping about, or driving a hoop, or tossing a ball, like the other boys in the street. I pitied him. It seemed so hard for the little fellow to go in the dark all the time, never to see the sun or any of the pretty things in the world—never to see even the faces of his parents, and brothers, and sisters. So I stopped him to talk with him. He told me that his name was Robert, that his father was sick at home, and that his mother had to take in washing, and work very hard to get a living. All the other children had some kind of work to do, but as he could not see to work, he was sent after clothes for his mother to wash! I asked him if he did not feel angry because he was blind. He looked very thoughtful and solemn for a moment, and then he smiled and said, "Sometimes I think it hard to have to creep about so. Sometimes I want to look at the brilliant sun that warms me—and at the sweet birds that sing for me—and at the flowers that feel so soft when I touch them. But God made me blind, and I know that it is best for me; and I am so glad that he did not make me deaf and dumb too. I am so glad that he gave me a good mother, and a Sunday-school to go to, instead of making me one of the heathen children that pray to snakes and idols."

"But, Robert, if you could see, you could help your mother more." I said this without thinking, and was sorry as soon as I said it; for the little boy's smile went right away, and tears filled his blind eyes, and ran down his pale cheeks.

"Yes, he said, "I often tell mother so; but she says that I help her a great deal now, and that she would not spare me for the world; and father says, I'm the best nurse he ever had, if I am blind."

"I am sure you are a good boy, Robert," I answered quickly.

"No, sir," he said; "I am not good, but have got a very wicked heart—and I think a great many wicked thoughts; and if it was not for the Saviour, I don't know what I would do!"

"And how does the Saviour help you?"
"O! sir, I pray to him, and then he comes into my heart, and says, 'I forgive you, Robert! I love you, poor blind boy! I will take away your evil heart and give you a new one.' And then I feel so happy; and it seems to me as if I could almost hear the angels singing up in heaven."

"Well, Robert, that is right. And do you ever expect to see the angels?"

"O! yes, sir; when I die, my spirit will not be blind. It is only my clay house that has no windows. I can see with my mind now, and that, mother tells me, is the way they see in heaven. And I heard my father reading in the Bible the other day, where it tells about heaven, and it said there is 'no night there.' But here it is night to blind people all the time. O! sir, when I feel sorry because I cannot see, I think about heaven, and it comforts me."

I saw now that Robert began to be uneasy, and acted as if he wanted to go on. I said, "Don't you like to talk with me, Robert?"

"Yes, sir, I do; and it's very kind of you to speak to a poor blind boy; but mother will be waiting for the clothes."

This evidence of the little fellow's frankness and fidelity pleased me. I had become much interested, and made up my mind to find out more about him. So I took some money out of my pocket, and gave it to him, telling him to take it to buy something for his sick father. Again the tears filled his blind eyes.

"O! sir," he said, "you are too good. I was just wishing I could buy something for poor, sick father; he has no appetite, and we have nothing in the house but potatoes. He tries to eat them, and never complains; but if I could only get a chicken for him, it would make him better, I know it would! But I don't want you to give me the money. Can't I work for you and earn it?"

I made him take the money, and then watched him to see what he would do. He went as fast as he could for the clothes; then bought a chicken to make broth of; then a stale loaf of bread for toast; and felt his way home, trembling all over with delight. I followed him without his knowing it. He went to a little old-looking house, that seemed to have but one room. I saw that he put the bread and chicken under the clothes, and went (as I thought by the sound) close to his father's bed before he showed them; then dropping the clothes, he held up the loaf in one hand, and the fowl in the other, saying, "See, father; see what God has sent you!"

He then told about my meeting him and giving him the money, and added, "I am sure, father, that God put it into the kind man's heart; for God sees how much you wanted something to nourish you."

I am afraid, children, that there were some tears in Uncle Jesse's eyes, as he turned away from the blind boy's home.

How beautiful to love God and to trust in him as poor Robert did! Could you be so contented and happy, if you were as poor as he was, and blind too? Think about it, dear children.

Selections.

The Voice of the Old Pulpit.

BY THE REV. J. ROBERTS, RUTHIN, NORTH WALES.

THE OLD PULPIT'S COMPLAINTS.

I complain because some very ungodly characters have taken the liberty of ascending my steps. My heaviest sorrow I tell first. After this I feel my bosom much relieved. The most unpleasant burden that ever stood behind my cushion was a wicked man. If I had known him when he was advancing, and had I had sufficient strength, I would have bolted my door in his face before the whole congregation;—yea, I would have stood against him, as immovable as a rock, and left him on my steps, with his face towards the people, pulling at my door, till his head was covered with shame, and his tongue forgot all it intended to say. But the fact is, that some "have preached to others," and were themselves "cast away!" I have gloried in some who are now a disgrace even to drunkards! They used to cry to others, to beware of sins which they themselves cherished! They called upon their hearers to embrace the Saviour, whom they trod under foot! They turned their faces from heaven, and run towards an abyss of woe, while they warned others of their great danger! They fought against God, and said in themselves, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?" While they cried unto their fellow-men, ap-

pearantly with much zeal, "Be ye reconciled to God!" Yea, there are some sinking in the bottomless pit, who have ascended my stairs, and polluted my carpets with their unclean feet! I have heard some inviting others to the waters of life, who are now pleading in vain for a drop of water to cool their own tongues! The leaves of my Bible have been soiled by the fingers of many whose hands are now bound in everlasting chains; Yea, alas! there are many crying aloud, "We are tormented in this flame,"—the echo of whose sermons is at this moment ringing in my ears! My hearers ought not to blame me for this; the shame is theirs. It is the world that furnishes the Pulpit and the Church with hypocrites. As soon as they are known, they are rejected. The wolves that come to the fold in sheep-skins are to be blamed, and not the innocent flock. The Church militant never said, neither did I—the Pulpit—pretend, that our walls are to high for hypocrites to climb over.

I complain, because some look at me as a mere workshop to make a living in. There may be a few, even among Welsh Dissenters, who do not look higher than this,—Though I confess the temptation is not very strong. It would be a new thing in the Principality to see a minister, who depended upon the flock, living in a palace, driving his carriage, possessing a costly wardrobe and much wealth. My complainings to many a congregation should be,—"You muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." You do not remember that "The workman is worthy of his meat." You have forgotten that those whom you have chosen to be your pastors are men, reading, travelling, dressing, eating, and keeping families. But I say to the aspirants for the pulpit, whether they be Churchmen or Dissenters—whether they trust to the compulsory system, or boast in the voluntary—If you have not something higher in view than to make a living, I would counsel you to look somewhere else than to me. Turn to sea or land—to the army or navy; inquire at the office of the lawyer, the manufacturer, or the merchant. It would be better for you to beat the anvil, to follow the plow, to break stones on the road, or to sweep the streets, than to have anything to do with me.

I complain, because I have been compelled to serve as a stage, to exhibit men, and not Christ. I have strong reasons to fear that many a prayer and many a sermon have been composed, long, and rough journeys have been travelled, and great efforts have been made in the pulpit, while the preacher had nothing higher in view than to show himself. I am willing—yea, I like—to see, in the far distance, the comely preacher and the graceful motions. I like to hear the sonorous tongue pouring forth its eloquence. All these are advantageous, to show my Master, if he is in front. But I have been compelled to see the preacher and his talents made the subject of the artist; while Christ, his cross, his salvation, judgement, and eternity, were pushed to the distance, and used merely as a shade to set him forth. The preacher looked larger and more conspicuous than any of these great realities. Man was painted, and his portrait exhibited, while the Saviour, was left far behind.

I complain because I have been too long used as a place of refuge for blind bigotry and prejudices. I have heard preachers intimating that their brothers of other persuasions were diffusing errors which they never entertained. Every one walked his own way—the farthest side from his neighbours. If each had taken a middle course they might reach each other; and if they had bent a little to this and that side, they might go arm-in-arm. Such conduct made one pulpit appear at variance with the other, instead of all the pulpits to be fighting against sin and Satan. But this complaint may be numbered among the things that are bygone; which to me is a source of great thankfulness and joy.

I complain because many who have stood on my floor did not do my work with all their might. I do not mean that they had not a mighty voice to cry aloud. I have oftentimes too much of this—too much mere lung force and noise; but what I want is the profound thought, bathed in evangelic sentiment, conveyed in the most clear, condensed, and forcible terms. It is not requisite that my children should belong to a high aristocratic family. It is not true that I ever looked with contempt upon any, because he had been either a weaver, or a blacksmith, or a ploughman, or a shepherd, or a fisher. The son of a tinker, who writes a "Pilgrim's Progress," is as acceptable to me as the son of a great king, who writes the "Song of Songs." It is immaterial whether my children had been studying the Bible and the book of nature at home with their parents, or had been regularly brought up in the academies and universities, under the most finished professors. When I recollect that my theme is the cross, and my great object the salvation of souls, I consider that I am worthy of the highest talents,—and those talents made seven times more refined than is required for any other calling. I once asked my great competitor, the stage, how he made more impression with his empty sound than I did with my realities? "O," said he, "my sons act fictions as if they were facts, while thy children handle facts as if they were fictions." This ex-