

Teachers' Department.

Sabbath School Scripture Lessons.

SEPTEMBER 14th, 1856.

Subject.—CHRIST'S DISCOURSE WITH HIS DISCIPLES CONTINUED.

For Repeating. For Reading. John xv. 1-6. | John xv. 16-27.

SEPTEMBER 21st, 1856.

Subject.—THE HOLY SPIRIT PROMISED AND HIS OFFICES DESCRIBED.

For Repeating. For Reading. John xv. 22-25. | John xvi. 1-16.

For the Christian Messenger.

Rupert Rudolph's Letters to his Cousin. [No 1.]

MY DEAR COUSIN:

As you and I are both included in that class of individuals, known as "boys"; and from my affinity, I suppose, may be naturally argued my sympathy with them, in consideration of which I beg at present to offer a few remarks, concerning our precise situation and prospects—as regards our future destiny, and our relation to the welfare of our country, yet obscured by the mists of intervening years.

Perhaps you never consider that "in a few short years" this country—our own dear native land, is to be delivered over into the possession of us—boys—yes, with all its institutions, civil and political—all to be ours.

The railways and telegraphs—steam-boats and ships—upon which men are so busily engaged, constructing, completing, and improving; are to be theirs but a short time, and then they are all to be our own property. The cities, farms and forests—the rivers and bays with all they contain, are to be our possession and inheritance. And we are to be the men; from among us are to be selected, those who are to stand at the wheel of government, and guide our country through the pathless maze of futurity. Every post of honor, responsibility and usefulness, is to be filled by some of us: those who are to devise our laws—to control our institutions—our editors—ministers—lawyers—doctors—teachers,—men of the time, are now, all boys.

And are these all the characters which are to give feature and distinction to our country? Would to Heaven they were, but alas! are the jails to be desolate—the poor-houses to be forsaken—the penitentiaries to be unoccupied? are the grogshops which disgrace and devastate our towns and villages, to rear their deathlike heads no more amongst us? I have hopes—yes, and fears too—the latter are more generally a truth-teller than the former—but if those saddening institutions are still to be patronised, their votaries must also be from among the boys.

True to the inclination given to the twig, the oak retains its shape and just as true if we want an honorable and Christian nation, we must have noble-hearted and virtuous boys.

Hence it is of first importance for us to get instruction—to bring out our dormant energies—to awaken to a true sense of our responsibility—so that a noble and exemplary strife, for the most useful, honorable place in society, may be awakened and give us something more than the empty name of "citizen," and cause unborn generations in their age, to hail us as some of their noblest benefactors. Numerous are the spectres placed in virtue's path; and numerous are the fascinating illusions situate in vice's bowers, to alarm from the one, and allure to the other; folly and pleasure, indigenous weeds in nature's garden require no tender care, or gentle culture to ensure an exuberant growth, while wisdom and virtue, transplanted exotics demand unceasing care and earnest attention, to preserve them from the early fatality to which their ungenial situation renders them peculiarly incident.

He who voluntarily forsakes the path of knowledge, for the glowing avenues of folly and pleasure, is of immediate kindred with the dog in the fable, that dropped his joint of meat into the stream in order to seize a more delicious morsel, which only proved to be the shadow of the booty which he then possessed; he discovered his mistake, but only to see his prize swept beyond his reach by the force of the restless current.

Knowledge, in our age, is so immediately within the reach of every individual, that there is no excuse for an ignorant man. When we

consider the deeds of men in past ages, and consider under what circumstances they were accomplished, we almost think that they were a species of demi-gods influenced by motives dissimilar to those to which we are subject; but their own testimony proves this to be unfounded. More anon. Adieu, my dear cousin, for the present.

RUPERT RUDOLPH.

THE DEW OF BLESSING.

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

[As reported by a short-hand writer.]

"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."—HOSEA xiv. 5-7.

[Concluded]

II. NOTICE THE VARIOUS EFFECTS OF DIVINE GRACE IN A BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE, as here set forth.

1. The first thing grace does when it comes into a believer's heart is to make it grow upwards—"he shall grow as the lily." This is the daffodil lily, which after refreshing rain or heavy dew, springs up rapidly, and makes the meadows of the East as a yellow carpet. Did you never notice how quickly the young convert grows up in grace at first? Some older Christians see this, and say, "You grow too fast young man; the frosts will be coming soon, and they will nip your zeal and piety." Now don't tell the young that their piety will be nipped. If it is to be nipped, don't put any of your frosty breath upon it. God can manage them better than you; leave them to God. Oh, how zealous the young convert is! There is not a prayer meeting but he is there. How sweet is the word! How sweet the singing! He would go over hedge and ditch to hear the word. He would go many miles to serve God, or to enjoy a moment's communion with God. His song night and day is of grace.

"The men of grace have found, Glory begun below."

And remember that this is a very precious season. I would not have you try to make it shorter. Let us poor young people grow up awhile, we shall have to pass through fierce trials, by-and-by, that our roots may strike deeper, but while we can grow up, leave us to do so. Never let our zeal be checked, or our warm love grow cold. There never can be any reason, in God, why the Christian's first love should wax cold. But since you say it will wax cold, don't envy the young man his growing upwards now. If he did not grow you would begin to say he had not the root of the matter in him; then let him grow. Grow away, grow away, ye young ones as the lily, your nipping time will come. Let the frost do that, but let no one else do it. Let your present and continual cry be, "Nearer to thee, my God, nearer to thee."

2. After the Christian has grown upwards he has to grow downward; "He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon." There is a remarkable phase of experience which passes over the heart of God's child sometimes two or three months, or it may be two or three years after his conversion. It is when we commence learning our own depravity—the power of sin within us. Then follows the terrible conflict of dismay and doubt with the young faith of the heart. Frequently when this change takes place Christians are anxious. They sing—

"Tis a point I long to know, Oft it causes anxious thought."

Just at this period doubt is the strongest. Though he thought he should always remain zealous, something has crept in; he is more prudent and not quite so hot. At such a time he begins to ask, Is my religion genuine? Well perhaps it is more so than it was; the first fervours may have been but wildfires, which flashed and were swept away, and then came the real flame of divine grace. It is quite as blessed a work to begin to find out the evil of our own hearts, as to learn the fulness of Christ Jesus; for both lead to one result.

What we want now-a-days is, more growing downward—more rooting and grounding in the faith. Of late we have become so tremendously liberal, that people don't believe anything, through trying to believe everything. A man will go to one place in the morning and hear plain "Yes," and to another place in the evening and hear plain "No," and will say of both, what blessed sermons! A female came to me some little time since to have conversation con-

cerning her religious experience, previous to being proposed for membership. I asked her if she believed that God's people were chosen by him before the foundation of the world. She answered, "Yes sir." "What," I said, "Do you really believe that God did from everlasting choose some to be saved?" She said, "No sir." And there are not wanting preachers who will absolve men from all necessity of sound doctrinal faith. I cannot find in Scripture that God ever absolved me from the consequences of an erroneous judgement in doctrinal matters. I believe that my thoughts of his doctrine will be judged as well as my other thoughts, and my thoughts as well as my actions. I believe it is a falsehood to say that God won't judge my doctrinal beliefs. He who gives way to heresy must account of his departure from the truth, as well as he that falls into open transgression. No one finds it written that we have liberty of conscience. Between man and man there is liberty of conscience, and none shall dare to call me to account for my belief, but between man and God there is no liberty of conscience. No one else shall call me to account, but God will. This indifference about doctrine won't do. It is a sign that grace is wanting. When grace in the heart is in full operation, it will not suffer that heart to be carried about with every wind of doctrine.

3. Not only will the Christian grow upwards and downwards, but outwardly "his branches will spread." We shall become more known and make a better profession. God's people are not long in making known their grace. Grace cannot be kept a secret, and if we have much grace it will be so much the more difficult to conceal it. If a man puts a light under a bushel we know what is the result; and if he puts it under a bed, you know what becomes of the bed—it is soon on fire. And you—are you secret disciples—are you ashamed of Christ? I confess I never yet could see anything in Christ to be ashamed of, and yet by all accounts some are ashamed. Ask a young man what chapel he attends and he will hum and ha, and seem ashamed to answer. Ask another what public-house he frequents, and he will tell you in a moment without a particle of shame. Is not this sad that Christians will blush for their good deeds. Some persons stand aloof because it is written, "He that believeth shall not make haste." A person who had been for years a Christian quoted this text to me, and I replied, "No fear of you; if you made a profession to-morrow nobody could say you made any haste." Another will say, "Suppose I was to fall." I ask you, is there more likelihood of your falling when you are in the way of God's commandments than when you are disobeying him? Oh, you answer, but I should bring disgrace on the cause. Well, and would you not bring disgrace on the cause if you fell now? You go to chapel and join in the services, and the world outside knows no difference between you and the members of the church, and if you were to fall, men would point at you and say, "There goes a Meetinger." Depend upon it your Master will keep you better than you can keep yourself. I should say you must be a deserter to be thus ashamed of your regimentals. No, oh no, put on your helmet of grace and come forth in the name of the Lord. Do you say, "will I be a secret Christian?" It is a thing I never heard of, which you never saw or heard of, and I have some shrewd doubts whether such a thing as a secret Christian has any existence. Christ always tells me that religion will not be concealed. If you love Christ we tell you as the maid said to Peter, "Thy speech bewrayeth thee." Perhaps some one is inclined to say, "But I know one who is a secret Christian." The fact of your knowing him to be a Christian, proves that he is not a secret one.

4. When his branches have spread, he shall be made beautiful; "His beauty shall be as the olive tree." Like the olive, because, first, that tree is evergreen; and, secondly, it is fertile and fruit-bearing. A Christian is the most beautiful sight on earth. We need not climb Alpine heights, basking in the sunlight, and gazing down upon golden valleys rich with verdure, or with ripening corn and fruits; we need not cross the sea, and touch at islands where birds of glorious plumage wing their flight, the noblest work of God, the grandest effort of our Maker is the Christian. Now the most beautiful tree is that which bears the best and the most fruit. If you or I had a tree in our gardens which was a fruit-

bearing tree, we should not care about its shape nor as to whereabouts it stood, but we should value it according to its fruit. In our churches, likewise, we do not value riches and talents, but say at once the most useful Christian is the most beautiful. The angels think him beautiful. God judges him to be very beautiful, and he is the best judge of what is beautiful. We have said the olive tree is an evergreen, so too, is the Christian. The Christian is constant in his religion. He is not gracious on Sunday merely. We have much Sunday religion, and a very good thing it is; but I think I like better a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday religion. There are people who rejoice to be called Latter-day Saints! but I like every day saints—those who are themselves holy, and keep a Sabbath all the week long. What we want is not a religion of the pulpit, or of the pew, or of the chapel; but a shop religion, an office religion, and a barn-yard religion. In my presence, not long since, a lady remarked that she did not approve of people thrusting religion into Society. "It was all very well in its place," she said, "and ought to be confined to the chapel." I said, "Then would you have beds fitted up in the chapel, my dear madam?" "Beds! no; why beds?" "Because," I said, "religion is a very good thing to die with; and if it is confined to the chapel, we must have beds like a hospital." She was confuted, and could only say, "You say such strange things, sir." And I rejoined, "Mine was an odd way of reproving you; but then, yours was an odd way of sinning."

5. The last of these effects is, "His smell shall be as Lebanon." By smell I understand report. As on the sides of Lebanon so many aromatic shrubs and flowers distil their odours that the whole region is perfumed, so will it be of the Christian. I often see and hear of people who are so anxious and troubled by false reports. Never be afraid of your character as long as the heart and life is all right. I have even heard of people bringing actions for slander. The rose never brought a law suit against the thistle for saying that it was not sweet; the rose kept on perfuming the air, and left Mr. Thistle alone, so that in the end everybody knew that the rose gave forth a precious scent. I like the idea of a good man's scent; the scent of a good man is like the smell of wine in old casks—it never goes wholly away.

III. Notice the EFFECTS OF DIVINE GRACE, as seen in BELIEVERS upon others around them. The effects of grace in the heart are always more or less visible, not only in themselves, but on all who dwell under their influence. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return." I trust you do not like a selfish religion. Some people attend a chapel, and expect a minister to be constantly preaching in such a way as to suit their particular state of mind. Now I could not bear to sit under a minister who was always preaching for my benefit. I should be thinking of my neighbours. I should say, I wish our minister would preach to sinners sometimes; and if he said he did not know how, I should reply, Then you are not fit to preach at all. I could not eat my morsel alone. I must be sure that my neighbour is not starving while I feed upon the word with great delight. Others must benefit besides and because of me: If you grow in grace, if the dew fall, the effect will be that "they that dwell under your shadow"—your neighbours and relations—shall return; return from all their backslidings, and all their wayward courses. They shall "revive like the corn" which has been beaten flat by showers and tempests. "They shall grow as the vine," twisting round you: as a vine trained up along the stately tree or hill-side. Thy children shall grow up as the vine.

A good Wife.

In the eighty-fourth year of his age, Dr. Calvin Chapin wrote of his wife: "My domestic enjoyments have been, perhaps, as near perfection as the human condition permits. She made my home the pleasantest spot on earth to me. And now that she is gone, my worldly loss is perfect." How many a poor fellow would be saved from suicide, from the penitentiary and the gallows every year, had he been blessed with such a wife. "She made home the pleasantest spot to me on earth." What a grand tribute to that woman's love, and piety, and common sense! Rather different was the testimony of an old man some three years ago, just before he was hung in the Tombs' yard of this city. "I didn't intend to kill my wife, but she was a very aggravating woman." Let each wife inquire, "Which wife am I?"—Hall's Journal of Health.