

## Teachers' Department.

## Sabbath School Scripture Lessons.

NOVEMBER 29th, 1857.

Subject.—PAUL'S DEFENCE BEFORE THE PEOPLE.

For Repeating. For Reading.  
Acts xxi. 26-28. | Acts xxii. 1-30.

DECEMBER 6th, 1857.

Subject.—PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

For Repeating. For Reading.  
Acts xxii. 3-5. | Acts xxiii. 1-35.

## THE QUESTIONER.

## Mental Pictures from the Bible.

Reader, you need but "search the scriptures,"  
To comprehend our Mental Pictures.

[No. 40.]

It is early morning. The rising sun throws his beams on the peaks of the distant hills. Two travellers are seen leaving a number of men, who appear as servants, and have been travelling with them to the base of the mountain to which they have come. The two proceed alone up its dreary sides, towards the rocky eminence. One is considerably advanced in years while the other is but a stripling, scarcely arrived to years of maturity. They are engaged in earnest and anxious conversation. The younger calls attention to the burden he is carrying and then to the lighted torch in the hands of his aged companion, and addresses an enquiry which appears for a moment to perplex him. After an effort to hide his emotion and prevent the falling tears from being observed by the young man, he looks up to Heaven and gives a reply which has the effect of hastening on the steps of both.

QUESTIONS to be answered next week.

91. Did any prophet come out of Galilee?  
92. In what language has man been spoken to from heaven?

SOLUTION to Picture No. 39.

Samson grinding in the prison-house.—Judges xvi. 21.

ANSWERS to questions in our last.

89. "He that re-buildeth Jericho shall lay the foundation of it in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."—Joshua vi. 26. It was fulfilled about 500 years afterwards.—See 1 Kings xvi. 34.

90. A copy of the law of God. He must write it out himself.—See Deut. xvii. 18-20.

## The Prayerless World.

Jepson (the sceptic) had hastily quitted the place on the conclusion of the service, and avoiding all who would be likely to address him, returned to his own apartment, where, sinking into a chair near the window which commanded a full view of the wide-spread landscape, then gloriously bathed in the light of the autumn moon, he resigned himself to thought. And thought grew deeper, tenderer, holier. An autumnal pensiveness stole over him. He lost himself in a muse. And by and bye the meditation became a reverie, but still connected with the recent subject. And then, as the moon sank down behind the high hills, and the dusk grew into darkness, he fell into a sleep, and passed through the gate of dreams into that strange world of unreal realities.

THE DREAM.

He was an Oriental, and stood before the throne of Darius the Mede. He saw the decree signed forbidding any prayer to be offered to God or man for thirty days. And then the throne and the King seemed to blend into one, and to grow and expand on all sides; and still vastening, and ever more vastening, it rose from the earth, self-moved, tremulous in every part with life, huge, dreadful, with deep rifts, and chasms, and gulfs of darkness. And there flashed there from a thousand lightnings, which darting and glancing everywhere like serpents, presently became fixed in the thick, dark air, like veins of white in a block of black marble. Then from the rifts and chasms of darkness, the skin-wrinkles and hollows of the living cloud-horror, crawled forth all hideous and unclean things, huge, monstrous; and after them all the wild untamed creatures of the universe, whose home is the blanks of space.

And noises, horrible and full of terror, were everywhere,—unearthly noises, to which the howlings of the midnight forest, and the wildest yells of savages, and the fiercer cries of blood-drinking, revolutionary mobs, were but as the welcome sounds of blessed childhood.

Then all ceased. A silence more awful than the noises fell heavily on the earth; and the lightning serpent-forms disappeared, and the spectre-forms crept back into the rifts and chasms

of darkness in the living horror; and after them the unclean things, huge, monstrous, crawled in again, and in every part the horror was tremulous with life. And yet a while the silence lasted. Not a sound was heard. All was still as the grave.

Then a voice, close behind the terror-stricken man, said, "Mortal, this is the throne of God. Harken!" And as he shrunk and cowered, a voice from the dreadful throne, clear and articulate, though louder than a thousand thunders, said, "PRAY NO MORE! MORTALS SHALL PRAY NEVER MORE!" And the sound went echoing everywhere, *Pray no more—never more! Never more!* And the blood thickened in his veins; and an icy cold, keener than of arctic winters, breathed upon him, and he became a pillar of ice frost-rooted to the ground; only his brain was on fire and his heart still beat.

And he saw the angels of God summoned to the foot of the throne. And they came,—forms of light, radiant, glorious as suns, and clothed in rainbow vesture. And they received commandment to go down to earth, and cause all prayer everywhere to cease. And at the command they waxed deadly pale; and the radiance grew dim, and each became like the corpse of a mortal; and their rainbow vesture turned into sack-cloth, and became a shroud; while every eyelid dropped with heavy tears, which, as they flowed over, fell, and falling, turned into blood, and rained down on the earth a red rain. Then they fell upon their faces before the throne, beseeching to be spared from such an errand. But when they looked upward, to see how their prayer sped, they were scared at what they saw, and fled away from before the awful brow, whose frown-wrinkles were the rifts, and chasms, and gulfs of blackness,—away! away! away! and fled, and still they fled, till they had left the farthest world, and faintest embryo of a world, behind them, and stood trembling and aghast on the utmost verge of creation.

Then, ten thousand times ten thousand demons stood before the throne, and eagerly prayed to be the ministers of his will; and, forthwith, came down to earth. And as they came, every star dropped tears of sorrow over this miserable world, and, waning, glimmered only, like a dying taper in a dark vault. And as they came near, all things felt their presence. The leaves of all trees turned black and shrivelled, as when fierce heat has followed upon hoar frost; every blade of grass withered, and every flower lost its scent and colour; and everywhere on the ground there were cinders for stones, and the dust of the earth was ashes.

And the demons spread themselves abroad over all the earth on their eager errand. Some of them entered into human beings prepared for such possession, who forthwith went into the homes and secret chambers of the holy, and dragging every one that prayed from his knees,—the old man in his solitary room, the child lisping its evening prayer at a mother's knee,—made them listen and look upward, as the decree kept still reverberating through the world. Some clothed themselves in shapes such as only the frenzied heretofore had seen; while others became a hateful presence, visible only to spiritual eyes.

The daughter, kneeling beside her dying mother, felt a strange, unearthly touch—heard—looked up—shrieked—and died! The young mother, pressing her first-born to her bosom, as it pined and moaned in sickness, bent over it in purest prayer for the precious life; and as she prayed, and almost believed her prayer was beginning to be answered, she felt a cold, clammy hand upon her mouth, sealing her lips from prayer,—as though a toad had crept there, keeping ugly guard,—and her babe fell from her convulsed arms, and was choked with ashes.

The father, wrestling in prayer for a wicked son, had the breath of prayer sucked up from his lips, and stifled; and tearing his thin, white hair, in the terrible revulsion of hope turned into despair, sought death by his own hands.

A storm raged over the sea. A sailor-child thought of his far-off home, and how his mother prayed, and with hurried steps climbed to the top of the quivering mast to pray. But, there too, the decree wrought, for one howled it into his ear; and, starting in sudden fright, he fell, and was swallowed in the boiling billows, while peals of hollow laughter encompassed the lonely ship, and shook the shrouds, and the sailors cowered together, and dared not move, for every wave seemed ridden by the hags of night.

The prayer-stiffers hurried to a deep, dark cell, where the walls, green and slimy, were dropping with the damps of ages; and where a chained and fettered patriot had found in all the long years of his captivity one only solace—in crying to his God; and they turned the NAME into a curse, and breathed it reversed upon his

brow, and left him, chained and fettered, a raving maniac, in his cell below the waters.

In their subterranean halls of judgment, hung round with black, inquisitors in robes of doom watched a victim on the rack. Their stony eyes watched coldly how he bore the successive turns of the torture-engine. But he bore all in brave uncomplaining silence; for inwardly he called on God, and prayer gave courage to his heart, and made his will like iron; a hero with none to admire, with none to know; his God sufficed him. Suddenly, blank despair fell upon him. The power of prayer was gone! and with it the power to endure. He cried and shrieked, till his cries and shrieks frightened away the slaves that did the bidding of the hoary judges, frightened away the hoary judges, and he was left on the tensely stretched rack, to shriek alone to the midnight hours.

A saint of ninety years, but still vigorous and ruddy, from the temperance and piety of a lifetime, sage as well as saint, prayed as he had prayed through all his years of honourable toil; and when prohibited from prayer, still prayed on. A hundred hands forthwith protruded from invisible or shapeless forms. He was caught up and hurried away towards a wild beast's den, down in the bowels of the earth; and as they bore him off, his white hairs streaming in the wind, still he prayed. But ere he reached the pit, he saw the horror, he heard the dismal word, a knell to fill the soul. He dared not pray! The hope of ninety years was gone. He struggled with the iron claws that gripped him, but in vain; and almost dead with fear, fell moaning into the midst of the savage beasts.

There was One in whom all nobleness, all majesty was summed. His step was more than royal. He looked the uncrowned King of creation. And he went forth as of right, to stay the miseries that were breaking the heart of the world, and crumbling the earth back into chaos. He strode onward to a secret place of prayer, that was thrice and four times hallowed; a grove of olive trees begirt it; and kneeling there, the generous intercessor for a world fast perishing, and offering to bear alone the deluge of wrath for his people, he offered one mighty prayer of concentrated intercession. In his agony he lay along upon the ground; but the ground had turned to ashes there also. And, as he wrestled in his mighty prayer, the ashes were reddened by the drops that fell from his brow, and bedewed his whole frame. Then forthwith came all the evil ones trooping from the four winds of heaven, and made the air he breathed thick with their baleful presence. And as they strove to make the Strong One cease from his intercession, the Strong One strove with them—the one against the all. But they had come from the living throne of power, and were armed with the inexorable decree; and his brow became pale with fear; his eyes lost their living glory; his knees shook and trembled. He tried still to pray, but a triple paralysis seized him. His tongue could not articulate the once dear name; the lips could no longer utter it; the heart no longer prompted it; and with a shriek which shook the living throne-terror above him—a shriek such as a God in his agony might give—he died; and his death-place was the everlasting grave in the world's hope, for now, beyond all hope of reversal, was its doom—A PRAYERLESS WORLD.

The man who had passed through the gate of dreams, and saw the universal woe that had fallen on the world thus doomed by dark decree to be prayerless, sprang forward to clasp the dead form of the baffled Mediator, and to perish with him. He started—and awoke. The cold dew of fear was on his brow. His frame shook with terror. He could not believe that he had "only dreamed."

And when he had recovered from his horror, he wept; but as he wept, he thanked God THAT HE MIGHT PRAY!

## The Irish Milkman and his Bible.

The Irish are proverbial for wit. The following is a fine illustration of their readiness to meet an opponent and silence him with his own weapons. An honest milkman, a good Catholic, in the country of Kerry, had obtained a copy of the Bible. He found it a great treasure. His priest learning the fact, made a visit to his parishioner; and on reaching the milkman's humble cabin, thus addressed him:

"My good fellow, I am informed that you are in the habit of reading the Bible; is my information correct?"

"Sure, it is true, please yer riverence, and a fine book it is too."

"But you know," said the priest, "that it is very wrong for an ignorant man like you to read the Scriptures."

"Ah!" replied Pat, "but you must be after provin' that same, before I consent to lave off."

"That I will do from the book itself. Now turn to 1 Peter, ii. 2: 'As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.' Now you are only a babe, and are therefore wrong to read the Scriptures yourself. You are here told to desire the sincere milk of the word, and one who understands what the sincere milk is, must give it you and tend you."

Pat listened attentively to the priest's authoritative address, but no way at a loss, replied:

"But be aisy, your riverence, while I tell you. A little time ago, when I was took ill, I got a man to milk my cows, and what do you think he did? why astead of givin' me the rale milk, he chated me by putting wather into it; and if you get my Bible, perhaps you might be after servin' me that same. No, no, I'll kape my cow and milk her myself, and then I shall get the sincere milk, and not, as I might from you, mixed with wather."

The priest thus finding himself defeated, and desirous that the mischief should spread no farther, said, in a conciliatory tone:

"Well, Pat, I see that you are a little wiser than I thought you; and as you are not quite a babe, you may keep your Bible, but don't lend it or read it to your neighbors."

Pat, eying his admonitor very cunningly and seriously, replied:

"Sure enough, your riverence, while I have a cow and can give a little milk to my poor neighbors who have none, it is my duty to do so, as a Christian; and, saving your riverence, I will."

The priest concluding that the honest milk-man was rather a tough customer, gave up the argument and walked off abashed.

## The Koh-I-Noor.

The most brilliant gem in the diadem which crowns the fair brow of Queen Victoria is the Koh-i-noor diamond. In dollars, its value is reckoned by millions. If we recollect aright, it was a present from one of her Eastern prince-dependents. As a mere bauble, a toy, an ornament, it is as harmless as a finger-ring, an eardrop, a peast-pin, a Jersey pearl, or any other gem or jewel which dazzles the eye, pleases the fancy, or adds beauty to its possessor.

But there is a superstition connected with it which, in the present state of her Majesty's Indian affairs, is of some significance. The *Evening Post* remarks:

It is the belief of millions in India that the Koh-i-noor diamond will always be fatal to its possessor, and that from the day it found a resting-place in the diadem of Victoria, the fate of the English crown was sealed. So deeply and generally is this idea rooted in the Hindoo mind, that the Bombay print from which we quote actually combats the superstition, as if there were danger of its spreading among its English readers.

It will be very easy for the more knowing ones to make capital of this superstition, and thereby greatly prolong the struggle between Great Britain and her Indian possessions. "Who can tell," says the *Post*, "how many thousand Hindoos may be seduced into rebellion by this artfully-circulated story? Who can calculate the blood and money it may cost to undo the influence of this strange delusion? Thus the disastrous fruits of bigotry and ignorance are constantly stimulating nations, like individuals, to do what they can to enlighten and elevate those over whom they providentially be placed in responsible relations, and punishing them if they neglect it."—*Life Illustrated*.

## Pious Gamblers.

One of the most amusing instances of external piety we remember to have witnessed was in a Madrid club, where every night, towards twelve o'clock, a *rouge-et-noir* table opens. Occasionally it has happened that when the game was at the hottest, the table strewn with gold and notes, eagerness to be read on the flushed countenances that leaned over the green cloth, there was heard in the street without, the tinkle of a bell that announces the passage of the Host. Instantly the game was suspended, the gamblers knelt upon their chairs, or on the floor, and crossed themselves and mumbled prayers, while the consecrated wafer passed on its way to some dying man's bedside. The sound of the bell, and of the steps of the priests grew fainter, and as it died away the gamblers resumed their seats, again grasped their gold, and stretched their necks, and once more it was *Rouge gagne et la couleur*.—*Blackwood's Magazine*.

ONE OF THE REASONS.—During the May anniversaries in New York, the following dialogue was over heard between two of the new-boys:

"I say, Jimmy, what is the meaning of so many preachers being here all together?"  
"Why," answered Jim, "they always meets here once a year to exchange sermons with each other."