

Teachers' Department.

Sabbath School Scripture Lessons.

MARCH 14th, 1858.

Subject.—ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PERSEVERANCE IN PIETY.

For Repeating. For Reading. Heb. vi. 1-3. Heb. vi. 11-20.

MARCH 21st, 1858.

Subject.—CHRIST JESUS, A PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC.

For Repeating. For Reading. Heb. vi. 11-12. Heb. vii. 1-10.

THE QUESTIONER.

Mental Pictures from the Bible.

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

[No. 55.]

An illustrious party are assembled in a royal apartment. It is winter, but the blazing fire and closely fitting windows exclude all sense of discomfort; yet pleasure scarcely seems to be the object of the company, grave anxiety and fear sit upon some countenances, while others are flushed into fever heat. Yet it is not the flickering flame that cause the red glow on those swarthy high featured faces, anger and scorn would rather seem to do so, as they impatiently listen while a grave official reads aloud some missive just brought into the apartment. And now uncontrollable fury distorts the features of the principal personage present, and snatching the paper from the reader he seems about to rend it into fragments. Three of the party rush forward, and seek to turn him from his purpose; religious awe seem pictured on their countenances, but it meets with no response from any others present, who with atheistic daring witness the destruction of the sacred document.

SOLUTION to Picture No. 54.

Nehemiah and his people rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.—NEH. IV.

A Competence.

Ministers do not preach for money, but this is no reason why they should receive none. When the churches shall afford to their ministers a competent support, the cry for men—the destitution of the ministry—will cease to be heard; and when ministers are enabled to lay by a little something for the dark day, the "thorn" will be removed from the "pillow" of the dying pastor, and his heart saved from the "pang" of absolute poverty.

Good Society.

It should be the aim of every young man to go into good society. We do not mean the rich, the proud and fashionable, but the society of the wise, the intelligent, and the good. Where you find men that know more than you do, and from whose conversation one can gain information, it is always safe to be found. It has broken down many a man by associating with the low and vulgar, where the ribald song was inculcated, and the indecent story, to excite laughter, and influence the bad passions. Lord Clarendon has attributed success and happiness in life to associating with persons more virtuous than himself. If you wish to be wise and respected—if you desire happiness and not misery, we advise you to associate with the intelligent and the good. Strive for mental excellence and strict integrity, and you will never be found in the sinks of pollution, and on the benches of retailers of scandal and gamblers. Once habituate yourself to a virtuous course—once secure a love of good society, and no punishment would be greater than by accident to be obliged for half a day to associate with the low and vulgar.

Future Wives.

My pretty little dears, you are no more fit for matrimony than a pullet is to look after a family of fourteen chickens. The truth is, my dear girls, you want, generally speaking, more liberty and less fashionable restraint; more kitchen and less parlor; more leg exercise and less sofa; more making puddings and less piano; more frankness and less mock modesty; more breakfast and less bustle. I like the buxom, bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked, full-breasted, bounding lass, who can darn stockings, make her own frocks, mend trousers, command a regiment of pots, and shoot a wild duck as well as the Duchess of Marlboro' or the Queen of Spain, and be a lady withal in the drawing room: But as for your pining, moping, screwed-up, wasp-waisted, puffy-faced, music-murdering, novel-devouring daughters of fashion and idleness, with your consumption-soled silk stockings, and calico shifts, you won't do for the future wives and mothers of England.—Mrs. Ellis's Lectures.

The Religion of Marriage.

Alas! for that home in which the highest theme of the husband's discourse, is the last cute bargain, which he made in business, or the levity, coarse perhaps, as well as trifling, which he last heard at the tavern.

Alas! for that home in which the wife, on opening her heart discloses no traces of any nobler feelings than such as the laundry might suggest.

Alas! for her who establishes no higher claims on her husband's regards than fidelity to his person, and frugality and order in his house.

There is no other feeling of the human heart is rightly such a support of personal religion, as conjugal affection. A man and woman dwelling together without the love of God, is a melancholy sight, for it is such a loss of spiritual opportunity. Nay, holy men have believed that the nuptial is a sinful state, unless enjoyed in the fear of God; and certainly, without that, it tends to sensualize the mind; it is in that case a heathen alliance, appropriate patrons of which are Venus and the idol-gods; and on such a connexion the blessing of the church does not abide, but returns again, like the apostolic benediction of peace, when supplicated on an unworthy house; the happiness thereof is evanescent, its duration is weariness, it is the profanest of all profane states, and its end—its end!

Oh, think, how ominously awful is that state of mind, or else how terrible must have been its experience, which is conscious to itself of a secret complacency in the severance of conjugal bonds! Remember the spiritual meaning of marriage, and then the possibility of joy in its dissolution is infernal; it is like a soul's rejoicing over its own ruin, over its own loss of sense of purity, its extinct capacity of prayer, and its vanished opportunities of right!—Mountford.

True Hospitality.

Many a wife might read the following paragraph from Emerson, and be wiser and happier therefor: "O, excellent wife! encumber not yourself and me to get a curiously rich dinner for this man or woman who has alighted at our gate, nor a bed-chamber made at too great a cost. These things, if they are curious in them, they can get for a few shillings in any village; but rather let the stranger see, if he will, in your looks, accent, and behavior, your heart and earnestness, your thought and will, that which he cannot buy at any price in the city, and for which he may well travel twenty miles, and dine sparingly and sleep little, to behold. Let not the emphasis of hospitality lie in bed and board; but let truth and love, and honor and courtesy flow in all thy deeds."

You who find some holy woman cross and bitter, stop a moment before you sum her up vixen, and her religion nought. Inquire the history of her heart: perchance beneath the smooth, cold surface of duties well discharged, her life has been, or even is, a battle against some self-indulgence the insignificant saint's very blood cries out for; and so the poor thing is cross, not because she is bad, but because she is better than the rest of us—yet human.—Charles Reade.

TWO RECEIPTS FOR MAKING VINEGAR.—Fill large glass bottles with weak tea, which may be what is left after drinking. Add a small quantity of sugar or molasses, and set them in a warm place, say in a window where the sun shines. In a fortnight it will be fit for use, and is as good as cider vinegar.

Take a pan of sour, thick milk; break it so that the whey will rise to the top. Fill a glass bottle with the whey, and to every quart add one-half cup of sugar. Set it in a warm place, and in a few days it will be fit for use.

A PUZZLE.—Those whom it may concern will please solve the following puzzle:

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P.

Select Sermon.

[Published by request.]

The Wise and Foolish Virgins.

BY THE REV. S. W. EDWARDS.

"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out."—Mat. xxv. 8.

(Concluded from last No.)

"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out;" so said the foolish virgins, and it was the cry of unwarrantable hope. When this request was presented to the wise virgins, the answer which they gave was so decisive as to shew that

the appeal was hopeless, and that the expectation of a favourable answer was unwarrantable.

"Not so," said they, "lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." Nothing is more common, nothing more ordinary than the lesson which we here find inculcated, and to which our attention is so seriously directed. Passing much which might form the subject of important observation, we ask Have you not witnessed the unprepared and the dying man, stricken by the consciousness of the vast difference existing between himself and the pious devoted Christian? Have you not witnessed the guilty, self-deluded man in his last moments roused, and startled by an appeal to conscience to renounce the hope on which he had hitherto been resting? Have you not witnessed those appeals which have been so frequently and so imploringly made to others for the help and assistance which they have felt that they were unable to bestow. "Oh!" says the man, as eternity opens on his sight, and time is receding from his view, "pray for me." "Oh!" says the dying child of pious parents, for whose sake he hopes God will overlook his past neglect, and for whose sake he trusts God will shew him mercy—"pray for me." "Father Abraham," said the rich man, as he lifted up his eyes from the place of torment—and which I pray God none of you may ever enter—"Father Abraham have mercy on me." But, "not so," was the answer he received. Vain, and feeble, and useless, will be the help of man. The only fulness that can suffice to save, is treasured up in Jesus Christ; the only saviour is that Saviour "from whom cometh every good and perfect gift;" he is the Saviour who bled and died upon the cross, and there is not another in all the universe of God.

"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," so said the foolish virgins, and it was the cry of inexcusable neglect. Well, indeed, did these foolish virgins know that they ought, and that they might have made a better provision for the occasion which called them forth. The rest of the bridal group had prepared an ample store of oil, while the same opportunity had been afforded to themselves; how then could they be free from the charge of crime for which there was no excuse, for which no apology could be offered? The same solemn fact will apply to all those persons who are destitute of that regenerated nature which we have already placed before you as indispensable to secure a place at the marriage supper of the Lamb. You may, perhaps, fondly imagine that you will have some excuse to offer, some apologies to make which will at least diminish the crime of your neglect and stay the infliction of your doom; but no; he that searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men, will scorn and put aside any plea; he will tell you with stern and imperious voice to be silent while he utters the sentence of your unchanging destiny; and, oh, if you have heard,—as you all have—of "the great propitiation of sin;" if you have been warned, as you all have, to "flee from the wrath to come," and seek the shelter of the cross, and the blessing of his grace—can you then blame any but yourselves? If you have been exhorted, as some of you doubtless have, by a father's tender admonitions, and a mother's imploring tears—if you have been blessed, as you have, with Sabbath hours, and Sabbath services, and Sabbath appeals, can you then blame any but yourselves? If you have been confronted, as you now are, by the exhortations of ministerial faithfulness, and anxious tender solicitude—if you have been besought, as in Christ's stead, to become reconciled to God—if you have been assured, as you now are, that you all may be saved by "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," can you then blame any but yourselves? No; challenged by the Bridegroom of the church, you will find yourselves without a refuge and without a plea, as in the fearful consciousness of your own inexcusable neglect you utter in the fervor of your eager application—"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out"—the only answer that will echo amid the thunder of the last dread tribunal will be, "take ye the unprofitable servant and cast him into outer darkness;" "The servant that knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes."

We notice in the third place the doom by which this request was succeeded. "While they went to buy," says the parable, "the bridegroom came." Foolish virgins; what did mere profession avail them now? They sought indeed to repair the error which they had committed, but the time for doing so had gone by. While they were hastening to obtain that which they ought to have previously procured, they found to their consternation and their alarm that eternity had opened under them, and that they were launched into a world of woe, denied access to that heaven

of which they fondly dreamed, at strangers to that mercy on which they confidently reckoned.

Now, my dear hearers, you have heard and heard often that there is a judgment to come. "Behold the bridegroom cometh;" the pillars of heaven shall be shaken, the stars shall vanish from their orbits, legions of glorious beings shall attend his chariot; the nations of the earth shall be gathered at his bar, captive death shall be led into captivity, the powers of hell shall quail before the splendour of his presence; the hypocrites shall be stripped of his pretensions, and the proud Pharisee of his boasting, and there shall be pronounced the sentence, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." We have here a solemn representation of what shall be the state of all those persons who are banished from the presence of the Lord, and what shall be the agonised yearning and convulsion of their spirits, when then they find the gates of heaven for ever barred against their entrance and themselves assigned to hopeless endless woe. If preparation for heaven is neglected here, men will find themselves at last standing in tremulous alarm before the closed door, knocking and screaming for admission, and when the judge shall answer from within "I know you not," they will each one be heard, crying in the agony of disappointed hope, "Lord, Lord, open to me; open to me. Am I not the child of pious parents? were not my earliest accents taught to lip thy praise? was I not numbered with the people of thy flock? Lord, Lord, open to me, open to me. Was I not a diligent attendant at thy house? was I not a constant hearer of thy word? was I not a liberal supporter of thy cause? Lord, Lord, open to me, open to me. Was I not active in the advancement of thy truth, and if I was wanting in the one thing for the absence of which I am now excluded, yet did I not much to mitigate the crime of my neglect and to stay the infliction of my doom? Lord, Lord, open to me, open to me. But still the only answer that will echo with a heavier and more dreadful peal will be, "I know you not; I know you not!"

Alas! the time for mercy will have gone. The angelic spirits will pronounce "the time is passed!" The poor conscience-stricken self-deceiver, sinking deep amid the gloom of a more than midnight darkness will cry "alas! the time is past;" and a thousand demons, starting from the chains that bind them will thunder back to earth and heaven, "the time is past, the time is past! The harvest is passed and the summer is ended and ye are not saved."

But, my dear hearers, blessed be God the time is not past yet; the period for exclusion has not come yet; the door of hope is not closed yet,

"And while the lamp holds out to burn, The vilest sinner may return."

I ask you, then, can you depart to-night from the house of God and still refuse the blessing which is now offered and which we press you to accept. Ask the ransomed throng in heaven which is the blessing which they all most deeply value, and every voice will answer, it is salvation by the blood of Christ. Ask the ruined spirits of hell what is the crime which they most deeply deplore, and every tongue will respond it is that we neglected salvation by the blood of Christ. And oh, if we could gather you in your disembodied state in the chapel where you now sit, when a hundred years shall have passed and gone, and if we could then ask you what is the blessing you deem most precious, would not every spirit rise and say with an eloquence such as never fell on human ears, it is salvation by the blood of Christ? Can you then neglect it now and not be chargeable with a folly to which there is no parallel, and of a crime for which there is no excuse? Once more, then, we offer you salvation by the blood of Christ; it is the oil of gladness; it is the Spirit's sanctifying power; it is the Saviour's melting love; all the universe invite you to accept it; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, invite you to accept it. All the ransomed saints, all the holy angels, all the saints on earth, invite you to accept it. And is there one among you that will venture to-night to retire and refuse? Is there one against whom, when the cry shall be uttered, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," upon whom the door shall then be shut?—is there one? I pause, that each man and each woman may answer for himself the challenge—is there one? Oh! I charge you that you bear the challenge from the chapel to the closet, and God in infinite mercy grant that when the Son of man shall come in his glory, it may be found that the appeal is not made in vain! Blessed, ah thrice blessed, are those servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find ready. Amen, and amen.