

Teachers' Department.

Sabbath School Scripture Lessons.

JANUARY 1st, 1860.

Read—LUKE xxii. 47-71: The fall of Peter. EXODUS xviii.: Jethro's advice to Moses.

Recite—LUKE xxii. 41-44.

JANUARY 8th, 1860.

Read—LUKE xxiii. 1-26: The mock Trial of Jesus. EXODUS xix.: Moses goes up to Mount Sinai.

Recite—LUKE xxii. 55-62.

MESSENGER ALMANAC.

From December 25th, 1859, to January 7th, 1860.

Full Moon, January 8, 11, 8 Morning. Last Quarter, " 15, 2. 43 " New Moon, " 22, 8. 2 Afternoon. First Quarter, " 31, 0. 56 Morning.

Table with columns: Day, SUN, MOON, High Water at Halifax, Windsor. Rows for days of the week from 25th Dec to 7th Jan.

\*For the time of HIGH WATER at Pictou, Pugwash, Wallace, and Yarmouth add 2 hours to the time at Halifax.

\*For HIGH WATER at Annapolis, Digby, &c., and at St. John, N. B., add 3 hours to the time at Halifax.

\*The time of HIGH WATER at Windsor is also the time at Parrsboro', Horton, Cornwallis, Truro, &c.

\*For the LENGTH OF DAY double the time of the sun's setting.

Christmas-Eve.

It was Christmas-eve—John Sampson sat beside his parlour fire, and chatted with his little wife who, as he took care to remind her now and then, had, "since this time last year," so sweetly said "I will" in the old church hard by.

"Strange hand!" he muttered, as he held it to the light. "Not Hugh's—that would be a foreign letter; nor George's—he can't write so well as this; William? he never makes the first advance! It must be opened, Margaret, before we can unravel the mystery."

The little woman laughed, and laid her hand—which, by the way, she had washed since she stoned the raisins—upon his willing shoulder as he broke the seal. A single sheet of paper, the words "Happy Christmas!" and a brief text of Scripture were all the contents disclosed.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another—tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

In another hour John Sampson and his little wife had wrapped themselves—and a good resolution—within the folds of winter cloak and shawl; and arm in arm, were wading merrily over the snow-strewn road that led to "William's" home.

"Brother!" cried John, as, in his brother's bachelor abode, he saw how much his little Margaret had done for him, since this time last year—"Brother! forget the past! Let us be friends once more. Come with us to our snug fireside to-night, and let our Christmas day be spent together!"

Poor William's eyes grew dim; and Margaret, with woman's tact, joined their two hands together, and then turned away; while words of penitence and hope promised a golden future.

As they walked home together on that Christmas eve, a stranger crossed their path; and, in the shadow of a doorway, stood to watch them all. They soon forgot him; but to life's last hour he will remember them.

Old Walter Claxton had a busy night of it. His little shop was crowded with eager customers; his little till was well nigh filled with coin. But he was not a Christmas man, old

Walter. He had a notion that people wasted a deal of time and money in "foolery," and, as he said to his sister that morning, he "set his face against it." So Walter sold his groceries with a grave look, and gave no "Christmas boxes," unless, indeed, the box on the ear which he bestowed on the crossing-sweeper could be correctly honoured with the name.

Then came the postman with another letter, and a smile; and three or four poverty-stricken customers had to wait while Mr. Claxton glanced at the one, and refused to appreciate the other.

There was not much to read, yet the stern man changed countenance as the mysterious page revealed its simple message.

"Forget not the law of thy mother." "Give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

"He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay him again."

Walter looked up. "Stay there! call back the postman;—and you, Mrs. Smith, needn't pay for that packet of tea."

Then as the "man of letters" hastily crossed his threshold, the grocer positively smiled! "You have not carried off your Christmas shilling, Craig," he exclaimed, "nor this small offering for your feast to-morrow."

Craig took up the shilling, and a little basket of good things, with eyes that were so full of wonder they could scarce express aught beside; and murmuring something about "poverty," and a sick wife, and "little Jim," suffered friend Walter to escape with a very moderate expression of gratitude.

But that night the "sick wife," whose heart misgave her as to her husband's thanks, managed to crawl from some back street to Mr. Claxton's counter, and there to tell him, even with tears of joy, how he had made their Christmas Eve a bright reality. Nor were such words the only praises that were uttered in the ear of Walter on that eventful night, for many a poor man's wife had cause to call down blessings on his head.

Eleven o'clock; and in the room above the shop Claxton bends thoughtfully over his mother's Bible. Once more he seems to hear her voice, to see her gentle smile; once more he stands with her beside the dying, and aids her ministrations by his childish sympathy; once more he makes her self-denying efforts to secure the wherewithal to give much to the poor. And ever and anon the strong man, as he reads the book she loved, draws his hand across his tearful eyes:

Then, in the street without, a shadow fell; and, looking up through the uncurtained window, a passer-by paused long to mark the book and its attentive reader. And when the stranger turned him from the spot, a smile was on his lip, and joy was in his heart.

The stranger's efforts had not all been in vain. Some hearts had been aroused to nobler life; some blessing had been brought down in reply to prayerful effort; and in God's heaven at last it should be his to joy over the work of this his Christmas Eve.

Friends who gather at Christmas-time—what had the stranger's message been to you?

Christmas.

"Christmas." The emotions called up by that word are as various as the religions, occupations and ages of mankind.

In the bosom of the Chinaman, or the Turk, it awakens no other feeling than contempt; in the breast of the skeptic of a Christian land, it awakens new doubts and fears; in the heart of trusting believer in Jesus another thrill of gratitude; in the brain of the little child sweet dreams of festivity and gifts.

The full grown youth gives the solemnity of the occasion a passing thought; then giving play to his imagination, peeps slyly over the shoulder of his lady-love, to watch the alternate flushing and paling of her beautiful cheek, as she bends entranced over the pages of his "Christmas Annual"; her heart leaping in her bosom, thinking less of the gift, than of the giver.

"I wish you merry Christmas," cries the happy child springing from his bed, and hurrying, half-dressed, into his parents' room, with that plethoric "stocking" hanging mysteriously over his arm—and, lo! its contents are rolled out upon the floor.

"A merry Christmas, aunty," shouts the little Miss of six bright summers, dancing into the room, where sits the meek matron, thinking—thinking of the long succession of Christmas days which have passed away, since she, a little child, flitted about like a bird from house to house, until she had completed the circle of her relatives.

"A merry Christmas, grand-pa," murmurs the wee-bit voice of the two year old baby, toddling into the room.

"A merry Christmas, darling," responds the good old man, whose temples are hung with the snows of many winters, yet whose heart has retained its freshness through all the long battle of life;—"a merry Christmas, darling—come sit upon grand-father's knee. He is a poor old man! and through the goodness of his Heavenly Father has been spared to see many Christmas days."

And now memory is busy with the past; and the forms of the loved and lost come up in sad review before his mental vision; the companion of his early years; the fair son who died in the first flush of manhood, and the sunny-browed daughter, who wished him merry Christmas, with a kiss for fifteen successive years, her white fingers playing with his raven hair—all gone!

A big tear gathers in either eye, and rolls over his withered cheek; and the wondering little one nestles still closer to his bosom saying: "Don't cry, grand-pa—I love you."

There is a class, who have but little to remind them of the return of the joyful day, the poor, who in their open hovels eat their scanty crusts, having no part nor lot in the shows and festivities outside.

Remember, you who celebrate the birth-day of The Babe of Bethlehem, that even He, on earth, had not where to lay his head. "The poor ye have always with you;" they are here in His stead; and wo to them who, with their own laps full of plenty, leave their cups dry; their baskets empty.

Winter Reminiscences.

"That old red sleigh with its long box that never was full, for down in the straw, wrapped in the robes, or on one or another of the four seats it contained, there was always room for one more. What a grouping of bright young faces there used to be in it! Faces in hoods, in caps and in blankets; hearts that have loved since; hearts that have broken; hearts that have mouldered. And away we went over the hill, and through the vale, under the moonlight, and under the cloud; when the stars were looking down; when the sun kindled the world into a great white jewel, but those days have gone forever away, and the sweet old necklace of bells, big in the middle of the string and growing small by degrees, has lost its power over the pulses.

In that old sleigh brides have gone away before now—those that were married to manhood, those that were "married unto death." Great ships have gone over the waters with less of hope and happiness, than that rude craft has borne over the billows of winter; swan-like shapes now glance along the arrowy way, but give us, for its sweet memories of yesterday, the old red sleigh.

Then, the days when we were "coasters;" and down the big hill, by the maple wood, through the little pitches, far into the valley we came with merry shout each, the solitary Palinurus of his own small craft. How like a flock of swallows we were, dashing down the declivity, in among a group of sleds, side by side with a rival, shooting by like an arrow, steering in gallantly ahead, like a jockey, and on our way up with a sled in tow, ere the party had reached the valley below.

And then it was, when the wind had swept away the snow from the pond and stream, and the ice was glair, that we put on the "rockers," and darted hither and thither, and cut sixes and eights, and curves without number, and drew the girls we loved, and whirled them like leaves over the highway of crystal.

And the schools where we spelt each other down, and the schools where we sang Windham and Mear, and the schools where we cyphered and wrote, and "went up;" gone, all gone, teacher and taught, like the melting snows under the rainbows of April.

And when, sometime after the great snow, the winds came out of the north for a frolic, what wreathing and carvings of cold alabaster there were. What Corinthian adornings surmounted the fence posts: what mouldings were fashioned beside the way! what fairy-like caves in the drifts; what flowers of rare finish and pendants of pearls on the trees.

Have you quite forgotten the footprints we used to find in the damp snow; as delicate, some of them, as a love letter; the mysterious paths down to the brook or by the old hollow tree, that we used to wonder over and set "figure fours" by, if perchance we might catch the makers thereof? Have you quite forgotten how sorry you were for the snow birds that fluttered among the flakes, and seemed tossing and lost in the storm.

And there in the midst of that winter, Christmas was set, that made the Thanksgiving last all through the night of the year, and what wonder the stars and fires burned more brightly therefor! Christmas with its gifts and its cheer; its carol and charm; its evergreen branch and its bright morning dream. Christmas, when there were prints upon the chimney tops, if we were only there to see them, where Santa Claus set his foot as the clock struck twelve. Christmas, when stockings were suspended by hearth and by pillow all over the land; stockings silken and white; stockings homely and blue, and even the little red sock with a hole in the toe. Blessed forever be Bethlehem's Star!"—Chicago Journal.

Common sense at last.

If our ladies will follow the example set them by the high-bred English dames at the court of Victoria, we shall have a second edition of the good old times when our grand-mothers said to one another, "Come early, and bring your knitting work!" Afternoon parties are becoming exceedingly fashionable in the gay circles of St. James and Buckingham palace—genuine daylight parties, when the astonished sun, "who never saw the like before," has a chance to weave its yellow brightness among the curls of the court belles, and gentlemen generally can avail themselves of a grand opportunity to find out whether the roses and lilies of their worship are the real-actual flesh-and-blood article, or only deceptive layers of rouge and pearl-powder skillfully plastered on to the skin. It needs a sharp eye to tell them apart by gaslight. These "dancing teas," as they are christened, commence as early as three or four o'clock in the afternoon, and terminate at a corresponding reasonable hour, say ten or eleven, and the English ladies declare that they are charming; that one of these "teas" is better than half a dozen midnight balls!

Which among our leaders of society will be the first to introduce afternoon parties into this country?—N. Y. Life Illustrated.

"My father's comin'."

A young urchin, before the new Act, was employed to sweep the chimney of a house in Macclesfield, and having ascended to the "summit of his profession," took a survey. This completed, he prepared to descend, but mistaking the flag, he found himself, on his landing, in the office of a limb of the law, whose meditations were put to flight. The sensation of both parties it is impossible to describe—the boy, terrified lest he should be punished, stood riveted to the spot, and the lawyer, struck dumb, started from his seat, the very image of horror, but spoke not. Sooty, however, soon found a tongue, and in accents which only increased the terrors of the man of law, cried out—

"My father's comin' directly." This was enough. The presence of an equivocal being, so introduced, unerved his heart; with one bound, the affrighted lawyer flew down stairs, and sought refuge in the street from the enemy. Lawyers, take warning!

Agreeing with her.

A clergyman, who was a bit of a humorist, once took tea with a lady of his parish, who prided herself much upon her nice bread, and was also addicted to the common trick of depreciating her viands to her guests.

As she passed the nice warm biscuit to the reverend gentleman, she said— "They are not very good; I am almost ashamed to offer them."

The minister took one, looked at it rather dubiously and replied: "They are not as good as they might be."

The plate was instantly withdrawn, and with brightened color, the lady exclaimed: "They are good enough for you!" Nothing farther was said about the biscuit.

Ghosts.

A correspondence of a rather curious character has taken place between Mr. William Howitt and Charles Dickens, on the suggestion of a writer in All the Year Round, that ghosts were "bought" and had no actual, independent existence. Mr. Howitt recapitulates many striking instances of the decided personality of these shadowy beings, and says: "Whoever sets himself to resolve all the ghosts that have appeared in this blessed world, from Job's apparition, which made his hair stand on end, or Brutus's evil genius, down to that of Capt Wheatcroft, which the other day compelled the War Office to correct the date of his death before Lucknow, in the official return, into thought suggestions—will leave Don Quixote and his windmills amazingly far behind."