

Teachers' Department.

Sabbath School Scripture Lessons.

DECEMBER 30th, 1860.

Read—JOHN xxi. 15-25: Christ's discourse with Peter. 1 KINGS xviii. 1-16: Elijah goes to meet Ahab.

Recite—JOHN xxi. 1-6.

JANUARY 6th, 1861.

Read—MATTHEW ii. 1-23: Place and circumstances of the birth of Christ. 1 KINGS xviii. 17-46: Elijah's sign to determine the true God.

Recite—JOHN xxi. 15-17.

MESSENGER ALMANAC.

From December 23rd, 1860, to January 5th, 1861.

Table with columns for Day, SUN., MOON., High Water at, and various astronomical data for the period from Dec 23 to Jan 5.

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

The Step-mother.

A NEW YEAR'S STORY.

"It is very sad for the old lady," said Mary Burnham to her husband, "I don't know what she will do; John was her only dependence, and his death seems to leave no prop for her to lean on. Has she any relative to give her a home?"

"If she had done as she ought to, she would have friends enough," said Stephen Burnham, rather bitterly; "as a man sows so must he also reap. If she had been a mother to us children, or treated us decently, we should have loved her, and been glad to give her a home in her old age; as it is, she has nothing to hope from us. John was her idol, she wronged us in every way to benefit him; little thanks she got for it too, for I have been told he was very unkind to her, besides being shockingly dissipated. Yes, she sowed selfishness, bitterness, injustice, and she must reap the crop."

Stephen Burnham lost his mother in early youth, and with two sisters soon after fell into the hands of a step-mother—the person now under consideration. There are many excellent step-mothers, who, amid manifold trials and difficulties, possess their souls in patience, meekly and courageously discharging the arduous duties of their position. We have known more than one such—noble, God-fearing woman, silently doing a martyr's work with a martyr's spirit—but old Mrs. Burnham was not one of these. She was of a fretful, uncomfortable disposition; and worse yet, a scheming, selfish woman. Bringing into her second husband's family an only son by a former marriage, she had succeeded by her unprincipled management in securing to him all the property of her husband, while his own children were sent into the world penniless. It was not strange Stephen Burnham's tone took a tinge of bitterness, for though a professor of religion, and a true Christian at heart, he was far from perfect. His meek, retiring wife had made much greater progress heavenward than he, and her ideas of duty were far more clear and controlling.

They were sitting round the parlor fire, the children had all retired for the night, and after the above remarks, Stephen took his newspaper and read, while Mary sat sewing and thinking.

"What is to become of this poor old lady, now quite helpless, with no property, no relative to care for her, no heart to love her? It may be her own fault, but who of us would have many enjoyments if we but received our just deserts? What is to become of unamiable, disagreeable old people? Somebody must provide for them, and not leave them to suffer." And Mary Burnham thought of Christ's infinite compassion and forbearance to those who were totally repellent to His pure and holy nature, till her own heart became warm with love to wrong-doers. She had long felt a desire to be more

useful, and when she looked round on her pleasant home, her blooming children, her prosperous husband, and saw how her cup was overflowing with blessings, she longed to show her gratitude to God. The command, "Do good unto all men as ye have opportunity," had of late been much upon her mind, and she had tried to find how and where there were opportunities for her.

As she sat thinking, a voice seemed to ask, "Is there not a way opened now? Ought we not to take this desolate relative into our home, and minister to her declining years?"

Her whole soul revolted at the suggestion. If there was in the wide world a person whom it would be uncomfortable to have under her roof, it was this very one—they had so few points of sympathy; so very many of repulsion. It seemed almost like introducing a serpent into a garden of Eden, to bring such a fretful, exacting, bad-hearted woman into her lovely home—no, she could not think of it; anything else but that! And a soothing voice whispered, "You have no right to make home uncomfortable to your husband and children; it is a duty to keep it free from all discordant elements! to surround the children with favorable influences."

But Mary Burnham's inward vision had been purified by much self-examination and prayer, and there was no clouding it by the mists of self-indulgence. "If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners do even the same." And a host of texts enjoining self-denial, taking up the cross, doing good to the sinful, rushed into her mind, and they produced a conflict in her soul—that conflict so often fought between love of ease, and the suggestions of conscience. She tried to forget the subject, to think of other things, but again and again would come the question, "Ought I not at least to propose it to Stephen? I don't think his feelings toward his step-mother are right; ought I not to influence him to feel differently?" And when Mary knelt before God that night, she made a new consecration of herself to His service, striving to withhold nothing, but bringing her time, ease, strength, talents, all she had, her whole body and soul, to Him, to be used in accordance with His will. "Father," she murmured, "I know Thou wilt ask nothing of me which is not right; nothing Thou wilt not give me strength to perform; nothing which will harm me, though for the time it may be painful and bitter. I would be Thy trusting child; guide me, and I will follow, fearing no evil."

Peace came into Mary's soul. A soft, sweet light lay on all its calmed waves, penetrating it with a joy not of earth—a joy true prayer and faith alone can bring. Not that she had decided with regard to this particular question, but she had decided by what principle to be guided; she had decided to do what she believed to be her duty, let it cost what it might, and, therefore, peace followed conflict—the peace of self-renunciation.

She talked the matter over with her husband from time to time, considered the objections and sacrifices involved, and endeavored to elevate his conceptions of duty to a proper point, and she prayed over it with an earnest desire to be guided into a right decision. More and more she felt, as she thought of the desolate, homeless condition of this aged woman, that they ought to offer her a home.

"Who knows," she said to her husband, "but it may do her good, to come into such a home? I have great faith in the influence of a true Christian home. We are to overcome evil with good, you know, not recompense evil for evil."

"Well, Mary," said Stephen at last, "the principal trouble of it will come on you, and if you are willing to risk it, I won't object. I shall just let her alone myself—she and I never could get along together—I don't know but you'll manage to live in peace with her, but I consider it an experiment, and a pretty doubtful one, I must say."

"We can but try to do right," said Mary.

Two years have passed away; it is New Year's morning at the Burnhams, and of course, every curlyhead there is wide awake by the first streak of dawn. There is such a trotting about in night-gowns, such ransackings, such joyful exclamations as coveted treasures are pulled out, and such noisy wishings of "Happy New Year," as could only be known in a house which had five children in it. But the grand event of the morning was yet to come. Anna had proposed that one of grandma's stockings should be hung on her door, and though Tom had at first objected, and Charlie declared "he wouldn't put anything in, because she pulled his hair so;" they had all relented, and all, down to little Bessie, (who, with infinite labor and considerable help from

Anna, had constructed a pincushion,) had put into it some little gift, and it was now hanging in a very stuffed, misshapen condition, on the outside of grandma's door and every little heart was beating high with expectation.

What would grandma say to the beautiful worsted cuffs Anna had knit; to the nice hood mother had quilted with her own hands; and, most of all, how would she like Charlie's unique gift of a stuffed black broadcloth cat, with yellow eyes, which the little fellow would put in because "Danna liked back cats?"

"Now," cried Tom, "if she should be in one of her—cross-fits, he was going to say, but he met his mother's eye—"one of her poor-feeling days, she won't like it much, I guess."

"O yes, she will," exclaimed Bessie, "everybody likes presents New Year's; and my cushion is a real beauty, isn't it, mamma?"

"A very nice one, indeed, for a little girl to make."

"I think Ellen's comforter is the prettiest," said Tom. "I wish it was mine."

"For shame," said Anna, "it's a great deal too pretty for a boy—just the thing for grandma to wear cold mornings."

A rustle is heard, and an unlatching of the bedroom door. Every ear and eye are on the alert. Tom peeped through a crack, and saw her start as the bag swung round almost into her face, as she opened the door.

"What's this? what's this?" she exclaimed. Then, seeming to get some idea, she looked at it and took it down, exclaiming, "Well, I never! why, I haven't had a New Year's present since I was a lit le girl;" and she sat down on a chair quite overcome.

Yes, that old, wrinkled, gray-haired woman had once been a light-hearted child, with sunny curls and laughing eyes, who had hung up a little red stocking, and found some pretty toy in it from a mother's hand. It was very, very long ago, but it all came back to her now as she sat there—the old kitchen, with its great fireplace, its tall clock, its hanging-table, her father's arm-chair, her mother's low rocker in the corner, and the pale, meek face of that mother, who had one dreary day been put in a coffin, and laid in the grave-yard—it was all before her as a present reality, and the hard heart was melted.

"Now," whispered Tom, "grandma is crying."

Mary Burnham wiped a drop from her own eye, for, to tell the truth, she had felt a little nervous over this experiment of the children, but disliking to damp their enthusiasm, had said nothing of her tears.

There was no restraining the little ones any longer. "Danna, happy New Year!" shouted Charlie, running up to her, and "Happy New Year!" "Happy New Year!" resounded from the whole.

"Why, bless your souls," said the old lady, wiping her eyes, "I don't know what to say, I don't—I feel!"

"Da's mine," shouted Charlie, pulling out the black cat by the ears, and pouncing it into her lap. "I dive d it."

"And Bessie made that," exclaimed Tom; "made it herself, and mother quilted the hood; isn't it nice?"

"And Tom made this cricket for your feet," said Anna; "it wouldn't go into the stocking, but here it is." And Tom looked out of the window and began to whistle.

"Well, it does beat all," said the old lady "I never see the like of this family; you're all just like your mother, and that's a compliment, I can tell you. I thank you all very much indeed. I know your old grandma is pretty cross, sometimes; but you musn't mind it, old folks can't be like young ones."

"Well, mother, a happy New Year to you," said Stephen, in his clear, manly voice, as he came in from the wood-shed; "a fine bright morning it is, and I hope you'll enjoy many such."

He had never called her mother before—never since in a fit of boyish passion he had vowed he never would—never! and the wealth of a kingdom could not have so rejoiced his wife's heart, as did that one word. It showed that the good in him was overcoming the evil.

Yes; Mary Burnham's "experiment" had been successful. There had been trying days after the arrival of the new inmate; days in which all that was evil seemed to be brought into exercise; when Stephen was irritated, and spoke severely; when Tom was sent to his own room, and supperless to bed, because he was impertinent to his grandmother; when Bessie was in disgrace for making up faces at her; when even the patience of the gentle mother was so exhausted, she sought her bed, feeling as if she could never survive another such day, and went

dering if she had done right, and if ever they should again be a quiet, orderly household as before. But such days had been lived through somehow; and now similar troubles were of very rare occurrence. The old lady's heart had gradually softened in that atmosphere of love, and better thoughts had come to her, till she had now quite lost the old feeling of animosity to her step-son, and was really attached to his wife and children. Still she was no saint, nor was ever likely to be. But Mary saw a bright side to everything.

"I really think, Stephen," she said that night "that mother's coming here was the best thing that could have happened for the children. They have been taught lessons of self-control and self-sacrifice by it, which will be worth more than gold or silver; they have learned to keep quiet under provocation; to give a gentle word and a kind deed in reply for a harsh one—and I know it has done my own soul good—the effort to always feel just right. Yes, I think we all love mother now; and she is so much changed."

"Yes, but they would not have loved her, if you had not always managed to cover up all the wrong, and show them all the good in her."

"O Stephen, I have not done that. I have so often felt irritated and unkindly myself."

"One thing I am sure of," said her husband, "it has done me good. I have tried to forget old injuries, and to do my duty to her; and it has given me peace of mind, and the old bitterness has all gone now. It is better to do good to those who have tried to injure us."

"It is always well to do right," answered Mary, her eye beaming with inward light.

And peace folded her soft wing over that home, and the blessing of God rested upon all its inmates.—W. & R.

Agriculture.

Apples.

There is scarcely an article of vegetable food more widely useful and more universally loved than the apple. Why every farmer in the nation has not an apple-orchard where the trees will grow at all, is one of the mysteries. Let every family lay in from two or three more barrels, and it will be to them the most economical investment in the whole range of culinary. A raw mellow apple is digested in an hour and a half; whilst boiled cabbage requires five hours. The most healthful dessert which can be placed on the table, is a baked apple. If taken freely at breakfast with coarse bread and butter, without meat or flesh of any kind, it has an admirable effect on the general system, often removing febrile conditions, more effectually than the most approved medicines.

If families could be induced to substitute the apple—sound, ripe and luscious—for the pies, cakes, candies, and other sweetmeats, with which their children are too often indiscreetly stuffed, there would be a diminution in the sum total of doctors' bills in a single year sufficient to lay in a stock of this delicious fruit for a whole season's use.—Hall's Journal of Health.

CINDERS FOR PIGS.—J. J. Mechi, of Tiptree Hall, Eng., has been publishing his experience in fattening swine, and, among other things, he has learned the fact "that pigs are very fond of coal ashes or cinders, and that you can hardly fat pigs properly on boarded floors, without giving them a moderate supply daily, or occasionally." He says:—"In the absence of coal ashes, burned clay or brick dust is a good substitute. If you do not supply ashes they will gnaw or eat the brick walls of their sheds. I leave to science to explain the cause of this want. It is notorious that coals are generally successful pig-feeders. Those who find that their pigs, when shut up, do not progress favorably, will do well to try this plan; a neighbor of mine found that a score of fat pigs consumed quite a basket of burned clay ashes daily. We know that there is an abundance of alkali in ashes."

A SURE REMEDY FOR FELON.—It is said by somebody, who pretends to know all about it, that the following is a sure remedy for a felon:

"Take a pint of soft soap and stir in air-slacked lime till it is of the consistency of glazier's putty. Make a leather thimble, fill it with this composition, and insert the finger therein and a cure is certain."

We happen to know that the above is a certain remedy and recommend it to any one who may be troubled with that disagreeable ailment.—Buffalo Advocate.

CURE FOR LOCKJAW.—A young lady ran a nail into her foot recently. The injury produced lockjaw of such a malignant character that her physician pronounced her recovery hopeless. A old nurse then took her in hand, and applied pounded beet root to her foot, removed them as often as they became dry. The result was a complete and astonishing cure. Such a simple remedy should be borne in mind.

A BOND OF UNION.—A writer for the Home-stead makes the following statement:

"My richest and poorest neighbor meet upon a common ground of fondness for celery; under the shelter of that vegetable spring up and flourish a variety of social feelings and neighborly courtesies."