

Youths' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, July 3rd, 1864.

Read—LUKE IV. 16-32: Christ at Nazareth. 1 SAMUEL XV. 16-31: Saul is rejected for disobedience. Recite—LUKE IV. 8-12.

Sunday, July 10th, 1864.

Read—LUKE IV. 33-44: Jesus performs various miracles at Capernaum. 1 SAMUEL XVI. 1-13: Samuel is directed to anoint David to be king. Recite—LUKE IV. 16-19.

DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE.

There are such in the world. Not a doubt about it. The reader has frequently met with them. There are various classes of men that one instinctively dislikes. The less we have to do with them the better. Civility and toleration are all that we can render them. They put charity to a severe test—they make large demands on forbearance.

Were any author enterprising enough to write the natural history of disagreeable people, it would not be difficult to find him a few specimens. The names, manners, and habits of these worthies might soon be brought together. For example, there is Mr. Viper. His maxim is to think as ill of others as he can, and to speak accordingly. Calumny is his delight. He loves to sting you with mean insinuations and despicable suspicions about your friends. Excellencies he hides; defects he magnifies to almost any extent. You refer in terms of commendation to certain persons, but he shakes his head ominously, and declares that if you knew them as well as he does, you would think differently. "No better than they should be" is a phrase often on his lips. You praise a sermon, which he admits to be a good one, but assures you that the best things in it were borrowed. You tell him what a bargain you met with the other day at a book-stall, and he informs you that you have been "taken in," for he has seen the same volumes, better bound, and in excellent condition, offered at nearly half what you gave. There is Mr. Pompus. He thinks none like himself. No matter what you talk about he insists upon thrusting on you his own wonderful sayings and remarkable doings. He walks as if he were nothing less than a king, and gives his opinion about this and that as though the whole world were waiting, in breathless suspense, to hear his tremendous verdict. There is Mr. Cant. He always wears the blandest of smiles, he has the sleekest and smoothest of faces, he rubs his hands with the utmost complacency, and bows half way toward the carpet when he enters the room. You never see him without having unpleasant reminiscences of Uriah Heep. There is Mr. Crossgrain. His nature is as contradictory as possible. He invariably opposes people. Whatever subject you mention, he is sure to raise objections. "I don't think so." "I differ entirely with you there." "I can't see it." These are phrases with which his lips are well familiar. Controversy is his paradise. He wears continually a pair of intellectual boxing-gloves. Were he in Parliament he would invariably be found on the opposition benches. There is Mrs. Screw. She drives economy mad. Hoarding is her "being's end and aim." At her house you feel that you are in an atmosphere of penuriousness. If she asks you, at dinner or tea, to "take a little more," it is certain that she means exactly what she says, and only wants you to have "a little more." She never forgets to get ready sixpence and fourpenny-pieces for collections. The poor children are kept on what is vulgarly called "short commons," and it is a curiosity to see the amount of patching, darning, turning, and transformation in general, to which the boys' jackets and the girls' frocks are subjected. There is Miss Voluble. There seems no end to her power of talk. Her tongue is condemned daily to "hard labour." She has never done conversing, and if circumstances compel her to give it up for a while, you may rest satisfied that, like tales in magazines, it is "to be continued in our next." She seats herself by your fireside, unfastens her bonnet-strings, takes off her gloves, arranges her dress, and forthwith commences her prattle about every one and every one's affairs.

But we need not enlarge. The above are simply samples of the human merchandise brought, wholesale and retail, into the great market of social life. Other specimens will readily suggest themselves to any one who will pause for a few minutes and enumerate his circle of acquaintances. Unquestionably we all know, too well, men and women to whom we cannot but apply the term "disagreeable people." There is much in them that we never have liked and never shall. Their absence is more desirable than their presence. When they come, we wish they were gone; when they are gone, we wish they had not come.

Samson found honey in the carcass of a wild beast. Wise men, in like manner, will manage to discover "good in everything." Let us do this with our present topic. There are some plain facts about it which we shall be the better for remembering. Here is one: disagreeable people often have disagreeable circumstances. There are exceptions, but experience convinces us that this is the rule. Unpleasant persons usually have unpleasant surroundings. When, for example, you called on Peter Peevish the other day, he was abominably snappish, was he not? Perhaps worse, in a towering passion. Well, may-be he had just received the news of a bad debt. He had opened a letter from the solicitors of Messrs. Dupe, Swindle, & Co., informing him that a meeting of the creditors

would take place at a special time. This being the case, is it fair of you to make comparisons between your beautifully even and unruffled temper and the perturbation of Peevish? How should you like similar tidings to those which he received?

The reader must not suppose from these remarks that we favour the miserable heresy that man is the creature of circumstances. To some extent he is, but never to such an extent as to excuse vice and sin. Indeed, it is the glory of true manhood that it makes circumstances its creatures, swims against the stream, makes its way onward in spite of opposing wind and tide. Those who are perpetually fretting and whining at their unfavourable position, instead of bravely attempting to conquer its difficulties and lessen its vexations, deserve the irony of Mr. Carlyle when he speaks of an acorn being nursed into a cabbage, or a cabbage-seed into an oak, by favourable or unfavourable influences of soil and climate! Man the creature of circumstances! Napoleon was not when he said, "There shall be no Alps," and carried his vast army over those perilous heights of snow and ice. Saunderson, the Cambridge Professor of Mathematics, was not when, although stone blind, he delighted large audiences by his lectures on the laws of light. Carey, Marshall, and Ward were not when, in the face of lay and clerical antagonism, they took the Gospel to the heathen, and lifted up the Cross where hitherto it had been a stranger.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that we are all more or less influenced by circumstances. Silently and gradually our characters are affected by the places in which we dwell, the occupations which we pursue, and the people among whom our lot is cast. It is almost certain that nine out of every ten good and reputable men owe much, in a moral point of view, to the situation in which Providence has pleased to put them. Otherwhere they would be otherwise. There was great wisdom and piety in the words of that old Puritan divine who, when he saw a wretched creature led to the gallows, said, "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God!"

These facts ought to teach us a lesson of charity toward those who err. A man or a woman goes wrong grievously; we condemn the sin, talk about it,—alas! perhaps half gloat over it, if the offender is an enemy of ours. But while we thus reprove let us bear in mind that the circumstances surrounding the evil-doer have most likely been such as would have affected us quite as unfavourably had we been placed in them. "The graceful vase that stands in the drawing-room under a glass shade, and never goes to the well, has no great right to despise the rough pitcher that goes often, and is broken at last." It is very striking and touching to see how the Saviour, in his messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor, makes allowance for them on the ground of exceeding temptation. "I know thy tribulation and poverty." "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." If a like charity dwelt in our hearts, we should deal less in unsparring rebuke, and more in kindly aid to the sinful than we now do.

"The look, the air that frets they sight,
May be a token that below
The soul has closed in deadly fight
With some infernal fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch the smiling grace,
And cast thee, shuddering, on thy face."

Again, disagreeable people do not always know that they are such. To wit: how much Mr. Pompus annoys you! You seldom spend half-an-hour in his company without feeling that his egotism is unbearable. His self-conceit is insufferable to every one but—himself. It is not at all insufferable to himself. Numbers of people marvel how ever he can make such a fool of himself; he, however, is not one of them. He would be astonished that any one should think of such a thing. He is in "blissful ignorance" of the fact that he has undue admiration of and confidence in himself. Equally unacquainted is he with the vexation which his vanity causes in his circle of friends. Love is said to be blind, and certainly self-love is doubly blind.

Now, if it is possible for men to be so miserably mistaken about themselves, we shall do well to take good care that we do not, at least to such an egregious extent, fall into this error. To have a mistaken opinion about anything is undesirable, but specially baneful is a false view of one's self. Let a man think too little of himself, and he will be timid. He will go through life apologising for intruding himself in the world. Hat in hand, as it were, he will be continually begging some one's pardon for imagined offences and defects which exist only in his fancy. Cowardly when he had need be brave; irresolute when occasion demands stern decision; ever led and never leading,—he will, in all probability, end in being a sycophant and a sneak. Let a man, on the contrary, think too much of himself, and he will be a social nuisance. He will elbow his way into places for which nature has never fitted him, and annoy people who just tolerate his presence from selfish considerations. He will disgust you with coarse manners polished over with false politeness. He will tread ruthlessly on his neighbour's toes,—and, in fine, render himself universally obnoxious. What, then, is the part of wisdom? Seeing that such evils flow from self-ignorance, we should strive to know ourselves, taking mental, social, and moral measurements of our characters. Can we do this? Yes. The inspired Book is "a glass" wherein we may behold ourselves. Divine truths are weights and measures by which we may discover how far we are "found wanting." They should not be neglected.

Of course there is danger here. Self-examination is a thing which some abuse greatly, and to their own hurt. As it is physically. Just as

there are pitiable hypochondriacs who feel their pulses, look at their tongues in the mirror, mark first this symptom and then that, wander from one medical practitioner to another, try every old and every new system of medicine, talk of nothing but their "old complaint," and brood over their real and supposed maladies until they are nervous almost beyond the power of endurance, so there are religious hypochondriacs whose experience is very similar. They have acquired a morbid habit of thinking about themselves, which makes them a misery to every one around them. You never go to see them without hearing a doleful account of their doubts and fears. Their "evidences" are always defective, and they are afraid that they will be "castaways." The truth is, that they have so completely fostered the practice of looking at and thinking of themselves, that they are now the victims of chronic religious nervousness. Into such an absurd and mournful extreme, however, none of us need go, nor should such cases prejudice us against a duty which solemnly devolves upon all. We are bound to know ourselves. No one ought to sail on the solemn sea of life, leading to the awful and illimitable ocean of eternity, with a vague and indefinite knowledge of the course which he is steering. Consider the interests at stake, and it will be seen to be inexcusable to the last degree.

Take a third fact. Disagreeable people do not become such all at once. Mr. Viper, for instance, was not always as malignant in speech as he is now. He says infamously slanderous and uncharitable things about his friends and neighbours. A few years ago, however, did not see him so spiteful. Had you known him when he was fifteen or twenty summers younger than he is to-day, you would be astonished at the difference. The portrait of his character then and the likeness of it now, if they could be painted, framed and hung side by side, would look like those of two distinct persons. He was flagrantly wronged on various occasions. Real injury was inflicted upon him. He allowed this gradually to sour his mind, until it has made him what he is. Step by step he went down the road of Slander, until he arrived at and became an inhabitant of the well-populated city of Backbite. Therefore, when I think of Viper, let me take warning. It is dangerous to cherish a single bad thought or one evil feeling. Feeble as we may conceive it to be, little though it seems, it will, if allowed a residence in the soul, develop itself into action. Inward sin becomes outward transgression with astonishing rapidity. This is finely brought out by our Lord in one of his parables. Discontent dwelt in the Prodigal's heart. But it could not dwell there silent and alone. It soon found words for itself. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Nor was that all. The wish and the words speedily led to something more. "Not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country." "Not many days after," that hidden evil of yours, my friend, will show itself to your fellowman, unless you assail it vigorously and slay it promptly.

We have thus been speaking and moralizing about divers unpleasant folk with whom, ever and anon, we are compelled to associate. But is it not true that in some respects we are all disagreeable people? Even though we may be Christians, it is possible for us to have certain attributes of character which we should be better without. A man may be building on the foundation Jesus Christ, and yet mix much "wood, hay stubble," with the "gold, silver, precious stones," wherewith he builds. The saintliest have defects. Little rents and flaws disfigure the noblest robe of righteousness. In all of us there are angularities that want smoothing down, stains that require rubbing out, blots that should be removed. Look honestly into the matter, and you will not be long before you make the humiliating discovery that your name is in the category of disagreeable people. Each of us is disagreeable to some one and in some way. The remedy? We need not give a lengthened reply. The remedy is this,—God's presence, God's truth, God's Spirit.

The Fretting Believer.

A fretting believer is a daily dishonor to God and His service. He proclaims to the world that Christ's yoke is a hard one, and His burden heavy. Be sure the world will take note of it, and set it down to the discredit of religion. "See how unhappy it makes a person," will be their conclusion. We cannot have the excuse for it, that it lightens a single burden of care. It rather binds a heavier one, and lays it on our shoulders day by day. It embitters the happiest life, and sips the poison from the very flowers, where others find only crystal honey.

Go, Christian, take for your pattern your beloved Master, who endured all His fearful suffering without one repining word. Like a gentle lamb brought to the slaughter, "so he opened not his mouth." If he bore such a heavy cross for us, can we not take up every day the little ones he has appointed for us? Not the smallest of them all but is ordered by Him. Only realize this, and it will be a powerful check to murmurings over it. And remember, it is those only who bear the cross, who will ever wear the crown.

SOAKING SEEDS.—The Chinese seldom sow a crop without having previously soaked their seeds in diluted manure, keeping them there until they begin to sprout. They hold that this not only gives the plants an early and vigorous start, but preserves the seeds from worms or birds. The practical results of Chinese agriculture are too important for us to speak of them with contempt. Would it not be well for us to use some safe steeps for our corn, squashes, melons, etc., as a general rule, and not as an exception?

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger,

THE CELEBRATIONS AT WOLFVILLE.

[CONCLUDED.]

OUR FUTURE.

BY REV. D. M. WELTON, A. M.

Turning now to a brief consideration of the course of action necessary, under the divine blessing, to the realization of our hopes, it will be seen from the very statement of our theme, that such realization has largely been committed to ourselves. We think and speak to-day, of our future, that is, in a very important sense, of the future that must result from our own doing. We are indeed of the number who believe in the doctrine of divine sovereignty, but this belief, we contend, is perfectly consistent with human endeavor, and instead of hindering, should prove the greatest incitement to it. We work out our own salvation the more hopefully and joyfully, because God works in us both to will and to do. The divine purpose is ever accomplished, but infinite wisdom has so adjusted it to human working, that Providence helps him most who most helps himself. And as with individual Christians, so with denominations. In the presence of God to-day, we are, as a religious body, largely the creators of our own destiny. The niche which we shall occupy in the great temple of the coming years, must largely be built by ourselves. We are called upon, not merely to wait for opportunities of usefulness and growth, but to make them. We are not merely to surrender ourselves to the moulding of circumstances, but circumstances must be moulded by us. We must not be merely like the vane that turns with the wind, but like the mountains, by which the wind itself is changed. We must strike not only when the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking.

To particularize somewhat, among the duties which demand attention, if we would mould the future to our wishes, we mention a firm and consistent adherence to our principles as defined in the New Testament, and as embodied in the worship and polity of the apostolic churches. Not only should there be a clear and full announcement of those great truths which constitute the glory of the Gospel, as Regeneration, Justification, Sanctification, the sovereignty, efficacy, and freeness of Divine Grace, and the certainty of final salvation; but due prominence should also be given to those teachings which explain and justify our denominational peculiarities. We should be especially careful to preserve the ordinances of the gospel from unscriptural modification and dilution. Nothing should be regarded non-essential or unbinding which is enforced by scripture precept and example. The words of the Great Head of the Church are,—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." As Moses did not feel himself at liberty to deviate in the slightest degree from the directions he had received concerning the building of the ark;—as he could not make it shorter or longer, or deeper or wider, than the pattern he had seen in the mount, so should we refrain from altering the dimensions of the door that admits to the church, and of the table on which is celebrated the love of its Lord. A union purchased at the expense of truth and principle would be unworthy the name. To part with our consciences for the accommodation of others, would render us unworthy of their respect, and we should lose all respect for ourselves.

But the future we are fond of anticipating, supposes the largest devotion within our power to Educational and Missionary operations. As to the latter, it must be confessed, that we are far from accomplishing what our favorable circumstances suggest to be our duty. At the present time, the Baptists of Nova Scotia alone should think of nothing short of appropriating as their own some distinct portion of the foreign field and of supporting two or three missionaries therein. They have the means, and we believe the will; and no difficulty, we are informed, would be experienced in securing a foreign territory as a sphere of operation. Our chief want is men, and this doubtless would not be so deeply felt, had we prayed, as we should, the "Lord of the harvest" to thrust forth laborers, and accompanied our praying with a wise and diligent seeking out and encouragement of ministerial gifts. The reflex influence of the effort to plant churches abroad, would be most beneficial to the health and growth of churches at home. A consideration of the wants of the heathen would excite to sympathy, prayer, faith,