

Youth's Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, April 23rd, 1865.

LUKE xvii. 20-37: Christ's kingdom. 2 SAMUEL vii. 1-17: God's covenant with David. Recite—MATTHEW iii. 1-4.

Sunday, April 30th, 1865.

LUKE xviii. 1-13: The importunate widow. The Pharisee and the Publican. 2 SAMUEL vii. 18-29: David's prayer and thanksgiving. Recite—MATTHEW vii. 7, 8.

A Story for Old and Young.

"Mrs. Ross, may Luther go home with me and stay to-night?" said little Alice Bell to the minister's wife, who was visiting, with her husband and children, among the members of his congregation.

The family, of which Alice was the youngest, made no profession of religion. Mr. Bell was a good man in his way; that is, he was honest and kind, but he had never become a child of God.

Luther went home with Alice and a pleasant romp they had. At last the children's bed-time came. Now Luther had been taught to kneel down by his papa's knee, and to repeat his prayer before going to bed. So the artless child, in the absence of his parents, walked confidently up to Mr. Bell and knelt down, folded his little hands, and in a clear voice repeated:

"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take, And this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen."

So quietly did the child act, that the old man was not aware of his intention until saying "Amen." He arose, and going to each, he kissed them good night.

Little Alice stood in childish astonishment, wondering what the strange proceeding meant.

When the children were asleep, the family sat long and thoughtfully. Each seemed to be pursuing an absorbing train of thought. At length Mrs. Bell broke the silence, as a tear sparkled on her cheek, saying, "What a sweet child!"

Mr. Bell took no part in the conversation thus started, but, leaving the family circle, retired to his bed room.

He passed a restless night, and to the oft-repeated question of his wife, "if he was ill?" he only replied, "no."

Morning came, and while breakfast was being prepared, the cheerful "good morning" of the children, and their playfulness seemed to drive away the singular gloom of kind Mr. Bell. The chairs were placed, and they sat down to breakfast.

Luther, wondering why they did not have worship, looked from one to the other as they began to eat without the "grace," they always had at home. Thinking, no doubt, that they forgot, he turned his eyes to Mr. Bell, and said, almost in a whisper, "We didn't pray." It was too much. The old man left the table. Going to his room, he fell upon his knees, he wept and prayed.

Mr. Bell and most of his family now stand at the Lord's table with their neighbors, showing how God "out the mouths of babes and sucklings hath perfected praise." Luther did what many sermons and exhortations failed to do, and now he and Alice may both repeat their little prayers by Mr. Bell's knee, while, with his hands upon their heads, he smiles and echoes heartily the Amen; and the family altar is erected and loved.

"Feed my lambs," said Christ, and it may be that the tender lamb may lead the straying sheep into the fold.—Lutheran Observer.

"KNOCK, AND IT SHALL BE OPENED."—Where are we to knock? "I am the Door," says the Saviour. "No man cometh to the Father but by me."

When are we to knock? "Evening, and morning, and at noon," says King David, "will I pray and cry aloud;" and David knew.

For what are we to knock? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Heaven in the soul, that is what we want; for heaven must first come to us before we can go to heaven.

How must we knock? We must knock in earnest. We cannot knock too loud. Good Jacob said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me;" and he got a blessing. We must knock perseveringly, too. The Lord does not always come immediately. "I waited patiently for the Lord," says David, "and he inclined unto me and heard my cry."

Here is the command, "Knock." Here is the promise, "It shall be opened."—Child's Paper.

GOOD READING.—A skeptic visited the late Rev. Dr. William E. Channing, and told him that he could not reconcile the terrible denunciations in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew with the meekness and compassion of the Saviour. "Let us know," said the Doctor, "what in particular troubles you;" and taking up the New Testament, he began to read the passages with the sweet solemnity of his voice. He had not proceeded far, before his critic said, "Ah, if the Saviour denounced in a tone like that, I have nothing more to say."

Man prays, and so confesses his dependence and helplessness and sin. Prayer is the path God made, on which man travels back to him.

A Column for Sunday-school Teachers.

THE UNCERTAIN SUNDAY-SCHOOL.—It is recorded that, once upon a time, a backwoods preacher discoursed to his flock from the text, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." He said, "My brethren, take notice that this was a certain man. He wasn't none of your unsartin critters that you can't count on. My brethren, he wasn't no such man as some of you are. You are the unsartinest set I ever preached the Gospel to, you are. The thieves wouldn't have troubled you if they were looking for certain men."

Well might our rustic friend take his stand on the platform of many a Sunday-school in town, city, or country, and utter his bias against the "uncertainty" of a majority of the workmen before him. Uncertain in aims and purposes; uncertain as to the ways and means of accomplishing what purposes they have; uncertain as to what the result will be, or, indeed, as to whether there is to be any result or not. The wonder is, not that the Sunday-school work has accomplished so little, but that, with the random, aimless, purposeless style of labor too often bestowed upon it, it has accomplished anything at all. We find the aimless, uncertain school, into which we look, composed of a clever, comfortable set of teachers, and superintendent to match, who all get along well together, think very much alike, do nobody any violent harm, never make a disturbance, and do not put themselves particularly out of the way to perform their full duties as teachers of the young. They know that it is right to have a Sunday-school, and they feel that they are in some way doing good by teaching in it. But ask them how that good is being done, and you find that the details of the plan have escaped their attention, and that they are teaching more from force of habit than from stern convictions of duty. The great end of teaching, the conversion of the scholars, is not clearly and habitually kept in view. Great success in this most important respect is seldom, if ever, attained.

There is a lack of the firm conviction which should animate the labors of every teacher, that the Word of God, taught lovingly and truthfully, is mighty and effectual as the means of subduing the rebellion of the natural heart against God's law. The teaching is done in feebleness, because it is not done with a belief that God will bless it to the ends which teaching should accomplish. It is very apt to be poor teaching.

There is a want of that close sympathy which should exist between teacher and scholar. The child does not feel that he has in his teacher a friend to whom he may confide his troubles, and of whom he may ask advice. When he comes to a knotty point in his lessons, he jumps over it, or goes round it, rather than ask the teacher to make it smooth for him. He loses much Biblical knowledge, simply because the idea of asking for it does not occur to him. The teacher loses many an opportunity to draw out what the child does know, because he and the child are comparative strangers to each other, and he has not studied the character of the child sufficiently to know how to get at him.

There is, too, a want of careful cultivation of seeds sown and roots planted; an absence of watering the soil, and of plucking out the weeds which spring up to choke the word, causing it to become unfruitful. The good gardener knows his soil, every inch of it, and carefully watches each stage of growth of the plants and flowers on which he spends his labors. The aimless teacher takes a great deal for granted about soil, cultivation, and harvest; too often resigning the latter to the Lord so entirely as to have little or no care as to whether there will be a harvest at all.

And there is a fearful absence of diligent and prayerful study of the Word of God. Too often teachers themselves are miserably ignorant about the Bible. They teach the children, in an imperfect sort of way, lessons from isolated passages, without taking the trouble to study the connection of these passages with the rest of the Sacred Word. Too often the instruction consists in asking the hungry questions in the "Question Book" on a lesson which has not been studied, but only hastily thought of on the way to school. Such instruction amounts to very little. A child of ordinary intelligence is smart enough to see through it, and despise it.

Friend and neighbor of the uncertain Sunday-school! Aimless and unsatisfactory teacher! please not to be discouraged. Neither be angry at what is plainly told you. The education of a soul for God is the most solemn and important business on earth. It is not to be trifled with. It is not to be performed as you perform a piece of work for which you care nothing. If you have been trifling, you must reform. If you intend to continue trifling, you are not fit to be trusted with such a work. If you are constitutionally incompetent to teach, you had better stop teaching. But do not stop till you have made an honest effort in the right direction. Try in God's strength, and you may do much better. Aim directly at the youthful heart; with patience and prayer follow the work from its very beginning, and God will lead it on to a completion which will astonish and gratify you beyond all your expectations.

HOME.—A child, speaking of his home to a friend, was asked, "Where is your home?" Looking with loving eyes at his mother, he replied, "Where mother is!" Was ever a question more truthfully, beautifully, or touchingly answered?

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Our Sabbath Schools.

An Address delivered by REV. W. G. GOUCHER, to the Baptist Sabbath School Convention of Yarmouth County, held at Deerfield, on March 15th, 1865. And published by request of the Convention.

(Concluded.)

With piety we associate: 2nd Knowledge, Knowledge is exceedingly necessary in the offices and teachers of a Sabbath School. We would not have knowledge without piety, but piety without knowledge, cannot do much. The Sabbath School teacher must not be a dwarf in the knowledge of scripture truth. Piety—intelligent piety is demanded for this service. The person who does not correctly understand a matter, cannot correctly teach it to another. The effects of ignorance are no where more serious and lamentable than in religion.

Add to piety and knowledge: 3rd An ability to communicate. And you have, we think the important qualifications in the efficiency of a Sabbath School teacher. An aptitude to reason, to illustrate, to make the lesson plain; to present it in all its connections, bearings and relations, and impressively present it to the youthful mind, is a quality exceedingly necessary and desirable. As respects these qualifications where shall we find them in a more eminent degree than in the Sabbath School. The best of the christian community are usually connected with it. Not that icy, misnamed bantling of hereditary and traditional birth, called piety—that clings for its life to usages and customs that were produced by ignorance, and stereotyped by prejudice; that does more reverence to man than to God, at the audacity of which, the devil blushes, but never complains. But the piety that seeks out opportunities to do good and is constantly making wider the channel through which it flows, by the earnest loving manner of its movement. This is piety heavenly in its origin and nature. It seeks not to live alone, but is constantly attracting new objects to itself.

The fact that the best of the christian community is connected with the S. S. proves that if we have not all the efficiency desirable, we have all that the present state of society affords. We pass to enquire:

4. HAVE WE ALL THE EFFICIENCY IN OUR SABBATH SCHOOLS POSSIBLE FOR US TO HAVE? AND ARE WE SECURING TO OUR YOUTH THE ADVANTAGES CONTEMPLATED?

The Sabbath School is termed by some the nursery of the church, and it is admitted by both naturalists and divines, that early training influences, more or less, the future character and habits. So we may form some idea of the efficiency of Sabbath Schools, by considering the case of those who upon a profession of religion come into our churches from the S. S. What is their ordinary attachment to the spirit, the doctrines, and the ritual of the gospel? By what love for the truth of the Kingdom of Christ are they distinguished from the world of mankind, or from the religionist who are antagonistic to us in religious conviction and observances? Alas! Alas! There is lamentable deficiency on these points. Very many of them seemingly neither know nor care much about these things. Their addition to the church is no real strength to it, neither in devotion or knowledge. Their connection with it is scarcely noticeable at social meetings, nor in any position where christian steadfastness, intelligence and piety are eminently required. We fear that not a few would be unable to give an intelligible reason for the hope they cherish; and the faith they espouse.

True there are honourable exceptions, we trust, to this statement, both as respects localities and individuals, but the general aspect of affairs convinces us of a sad defect in the religious education of our youth. In too many cases those who have attained the age of manhood and womanhood, apparently care but little to inform themselves, or be informed, on questions of religious moment and interest. Their profession is evidently more the product of circumstances, than intelligent conviction. The Bible has less influence over them in their religious attachments and preferences than the social compact.

We will not say they do not read, for much money is annually expended to supply them with books. But we ask, what do they read? Do they give the bible a prominent place in their selection of books? Is it the staple of their religious reading? We are constrained to answer, No. Neither the bible, nor books

that instruct in the weighty matters of the law and gospel, but light reading, tales of romance, that are flooding society. Not that light reading only which is issued by those who profess no friendship for christianity. But our religious society is like a sea, sailed by ships, registered at religious ports, and chartered by religious compacts, having all their papers made out in christianity's name, and carrying full cargoes, that very largely consist of romantic and fictitious works, that are stored in every community and Sabbath School in our land. What are many of our Sabbath School Libraries but collections of this stock? and of what real value are they to piety and truth? They bewitch the mind, but don't elevate it; they fascinate but don't establish; they occupy but don't purify; they amuse but cannot inform. So far as it is our business to amuse the children they may be of service. But so far as it is our duty to purify, to elevate, to inform, to establish, they are of but little use. The children who are naturally fond of toys and rattles, and whom we think it right to allow their childish amusement, are not the only class excessively fond of this weak food, but even persons older than they, members of christian society. And it is not that they occasionally look over a work of this kind, merely as a relaxation from more onerous engagements. If it were, no interest would suffer by it. But our fear, arising from observation, is, that the young members of our churches and older members of our Sabbath School, with but a few noble exceptions make this the sum and substance of their reading. Hence their piety is not intelligent. Their knowledge of the bible is vague and limited. For their reading is a mere pastime, an idle exercise, rather than a crusade for wisdom; an earnest desire to increase in knowledge, that they may increase in usefulness and happiness. From this class of persons our staff of Sabbath School teachers is frequently supplied, for want of more efficient ones; and from this stock of reading, many of S. S. Libraries are annually replenished. Obviously there is deficiency in the religious training of our youth. None will attempt to ignore the fact, that the home training is not what it should be. And we are constrained to believe, that our public instruction is not as thorough and efficient as it ought to be. We are not securing to our youth the advantages they need.

We have all the organization, and order, and method, and expense, and time, and action that are necessary to constitute an efficient school. But after all there is evidently a lack. We seem to accomplish but little. It is often said that our youth have greater advantages in this direction than their fathers had, and yet the fact is, the old have in many instances more bible knowledge than the young.

We will not, however, write "Ichabod" upon our Sabbath Schools. Our object is not to destroy, but to reform. We would not annul, but elevate. We believe the Sabbath School is capable of being improved. But it is always necessary in order to reform to be conscious of its necessity. We are conscious that in moral power, the Sabbath School is not what it should be. That the instruction there given is too indente and too scanty, and that as a nursery of the church it does not furnish the vigorous, beautiful, fruitful and ornamental trees that it ought. What then are the remedies we propose. We will now note them:

5. THE REMEDIES.

The teachers should qualify themselves for the work. And at the outset the teacher must be conscious of the magnitude of the work. Unless he hold the work in high estimation he will not seek a very high grade of qualification; for lofty conceptions only are accompanied with lofty efforts. While slothful efforts are the measure of groveling ideas, the teacher having obtained a noble conviction of the grandeur of the work will seek the corresponding qualification. This we conclude may be secured by,

1st. Making the bible a constant study. Using such authenticated help as throws light upon any particular passages that seem obscure. Commentaries I value in most instances more for their suggestions than exposition. Many of the published Notes on the Scriptures are like friends that are with you in prosperity, but in your adversity forsake you. They prefer help to you on scripture, where you do not much need it, but when you do need help they are minus. The bible very largely explains itself. The more I study it, the more am I convinced of this, and the more am I attached to it. I have heard some persons boast of the number of times they had read through the bible, while their knowledge of bible truth argued that they had not studied it much. The study of the bible is the first means we propose to promote efficiency. I would not say reject young persons from being