

Months' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, December 15th, 1867.

Acts. xxviii. 1-10: The viper on Paul's hand. Esther viii. 10-17: Mordecai's honor. Recite—JOHN xvii. 24-26.

Sunday, December 22nd, 1867.

Acts xxviii. 11-22: Paul arrives at Rome. Esther ix. 1-16: Haman's son slain. Recite—1 CORINTHIANS i. 27-31.

Shooting the Shark.

The great ship-of-war lay at easy anchor in the beautiful bay, and the waters slept around her, smooth as a mill-pond and silvery as glass. The sailors were idly moving here and there on the ship's deck, for there was nothing to be done. The old boatswain, a favorite with all, was among them, telling his long stories, or as they called it, 'spinning his long yarns.' Among this crew was a bright little boy, a son of the old boatswain, the idol of his father and the pet of all the sailors. He was so cheerful and bright and good natured, that there was nothing which they would not do for 'little Jem.' The morning was warm, and the water just of the right temperature for bathing. A group of the sailors leaned over the side of the ship, and seemed greatly delighted with something they saw. It was 'little Jem,' their pet, far out from the ship swimming alone. He could whirl over, dive, float, or shoot forward like a duck.

'Boatswain,' cried one, 'what a swimmer little Jem is.'

'Aye,' says the father, 'he seems to take to the water kind o' natural. I never had to teach him.'

'Boatswain, boatswain, a shark! a shark! Oh, he will get Jem in one minute more.'

The old man leaped up, and a single glance took it all in. There was his son playing in the water, lying on his back, unconscious of any danger, and a huge shark making straight towards him, and it was plain that in a moment more he would be crunching the limbs of the boy. The old man remembered that one of the cannon was loaded. Quick as a flash, and with almost superhuman strength, he wrenched the gun in place, depressed the muzzle, aimed a few feet between the child and the shark—just where the fish would be in a single instant. The match was applied, the gun roared and reeled. The poor father sank down beside the gun, too faint to look. The smoke of the gun cleared away, and up rose a shout from the sailors, almost as loud as the roar of the gun.

'What is it?' calls the father.

'Oh, Jem is safe. There lies a shark, dead and torn in pieces. How could you move the gun, and sight her, and get her off so quickly and so accurately?'

'I don't know, but I believe God helped me. Won't some of you bring Jem to me?'

The next moment a boat was lowered and the oars were bending as she cut her way to the boy. He had just begun to understand the thing, and was paralyzed with terror. Gently they lifted him into the boat, and in a few minutes placed him in the arms of his weeping father. The old man seemed to receive him as from the dead, and could only rock him in his arms and cry like a babe. The tears of those around so far sympathized with him that they welcomed Jem again as if he had come from the dead.

How wonderful that Providence that stepped in, and from a source so uncommon and unexpected, sent salvation to the life of that child! The only man who could have managed the gun so quickly and accurately, the only man who thought of the thing was the father. And when life and death hung on an instant of time, and on the accuracy of his eye and the steadiness of his hand, how he had them all in full use as long as needed.

My little reader, there are sharks after you, with wide jaws and sharp teeth—coming directly towards you. Will any power come in between you and them and save you? Have you a Father watching over you who will see that you are safe?

There is one boy who has several sharks after him in the shape of companions who are profane, unclean in conversation, who are trying to make him swear and drink and smoke. Will they succeed? Will his heavenly Father send in some power that will save him? Perhaps the prayers of his mother, or the gentle voice of his sister, or the loving heart of some good boy may be the instrument. Perhaps his Sabbath-school teacher will become that power. Perhaps the Holy Spirit will do it.

There is another boy who has a shark coming towards him in the temptation to forget the fifth commandment, and not to honor his father and his mother. The hour that he does that he puts himself out beyond the promise of life, and his end may be near. There is a third upon whom the shark, in the form of doubt and unbelief, has fastened his eye. Will he reach him and destroy his faith in his mother's prayers, in his father's religion, in the word of God, and in the name and salvation of Jesus?

Oh that between every child and his great spiritual danger there might come a power loud as the cannon's roar, quick as the speed of a ball, and sure as the eye of a loving father.

Would you touch a nettle without being stung by it? Take hold of it stoutly. Do the same to other annoyances, and few things will ever trouble you.

Subjugating an Elephant.

A late Cincinnati paper says, that, on Tuesday of last week, a circus elephant, 36 years old, 10,000 pounds weight, and named Tippoo Saib, while in Winter quarters at Connorsville, Indiana, became unruly on account of a change of his keeper, and went to war against all mankind. He would allow no one in his quarters, and struck at everybody who approached him with his trunk and tusks most violently. His keeper determined to subdue him, and the process and result are thus described: The new keeper, with nine assistants, had fully equipped himself with chains and cables for tying, and spears and pitchforks for subduing Tippoo. The first thing done was to fasten a brickbat to the end of a rope and throw it over the end of the tusk chain, which latter is fastened to one leg and one tusk. By means of this rope, a 20-ton cable chain (formerly used to subdue the famous Hannibal), was slipped around the tusk. Next, an excavation three feet deep was made under the sill of the house, and while the elephant's attention was attracted to the other side of the room by a pail of water poured into his trough, the cable chain was passed through the excavation and fastened to heavy stakes outside. All this time the infuriated monster struck all around him with incredible ferocity, and tugged at his chain with incredible momentum. The next thing accomplished was the snaring of his hind legs. This was consummated by the slinging of fresh ropes around those two stately pillars of elephant flesh, bone and muscle, and finally, by the strategy of the keeper and another man, these ropes were fastened to stumps outside. The elephant was now sufficiently pinioned to allow the order, 'charge pitchforks,' to be given. Ten men, armed with these ugly implements of offense, plunged them into the rampaging beast, taking care, of course, to avoid penetrating his eyes or joints. The tenderest spot in an elephant is just behind the fore legs, and that locality was prodded unmercifully. By means of a hooked spear sunk in his back, Tippoo was brought to his knees, but he surged up again with such awful strength that he swept his tormentors off their feet and made his chains whistle like fiddle-strings. After an hour's fighting he was brought down on his side, but for two hours longer he tugged at his chains with frenzied obstinacy. He pulled so hard at times that his hind legs were straight out behind him, and three feet off the ground. At the end of the three hours the giant gave in by trumpeting, which is the elephant's way of crying enough. The moment this peculiar cry was heard the battle ceased. The keeper made Tippoo get up and lie down a number of times, and he was as obedient to the word of command as a gentle pony. The animal was then groomed and rubbed off with whisky. He allowed all manner of liberties without so much as flapping an ear. He was a subjugated elephant.

Health vs. Precocity.

The N. Y., Evening Mail takes a very sensible view of the danger which often presents itself where unnatural stimulants are used to cultivate the minds of children, at the expense of their health. The following remarks are well worthy the attention of parents and teachers:

Europeans are surprised, we are told, at the precocity of American children, boys and girls, and the variety of their attainments at an early age. We take no pleasure in hearing these reports. Our patriotic pride is now and then pleased by them—we feel slightly American-eagle-ish, perhaps—but we are oftener reminded of the thin, pale-faced little children, especially little girls whom we pass on their way to school with books under their arms. Our children, like our women, are made to know too much, and are allowed to play too little. The sooner American mothers begin to take pride in the development of the limbs, the muscles, the solid flesh, of their little boys and girls, the better for the country. When we meet a mother who is proud of her children, it is because they are 'intelligent,' they 'learn so fast,' they are 'at the head of their classes,' they are 'ambitious.' Fathers pore over the weekly reports sent from distant schools, and are pleased at the progress of their boys in such a 'variety of studies;' they do not notice the 'old' look of their young faces when they come for vacation, that lack of the round fullness of youth, which American school boys nearly always exhibit. A precocious child is always a sad object to us. Precocity promises nothing—experience teaches us that. It is merely a premature development which interferes with physical health, and in the end defeats the very hopes which it has created. Robust health, on the other hand, rosy cheeks and plump ones, full limbs, lungs which make the air ring with laughter and shouts, and now and then with screams, are all promises of future manhood and future womanhood, which nature will keep as sacredly as she does her other promises. From strong children, unless art with its bungling and impertinent interference forces her to change her plan, nature will produce strong men and strong women—men who can labor for their families and their country as strong men only can labor—women who can assist their husbands as none but strong women can. We have heard enough of precocity, we have heard enough of variety in studies, we have heard too much of ambition, and classes, and proficiency; we have heard too much of this unfortunate superiority of American children. No child ought to know more at eight years old than it can learn at its mother's knee. The new object-teaching and the plan

of mingling study with play, has rapidly developed in this country into a hot-house pressing system. Our schools for older children are as bad as those for the younger, and our colleges are no better. Precocious children, precocious girls, precocious young men, precocious women, are too common in this country. We take no pride in them—mothers take too much pride in them, so do fathers. The country needs health, vigor, freshness in its youth—not precocity.

An unanswerable Argument.

It is easy to hold a small shred of cloth so near your eyes that it will shut out the view of all things else in heaven or earth. So do many of those who proclaim themselves infidels. Some paltry shred of difficulty is held so closely to the eye that the most convincing proofs all about us are effectually hidden from view. Who can answer an argument like the following? Does it not require more credulity to disbelieve than to believe? The words are by a writer from France, who has himself once walked in the blindness of skepticism:

'I was a skeptic, but this scene discovered a new world of thought to me. For afterwards, as I travelled on my lonely way eastward, I never saw a church in the little villages that were stationed thirty miles apart, with no intervening civilization, but the thought arose, 'Who is this Man that he can do these wonderful things?' Voltaire's sneers, the arguments of Hume, the ribaldry of Paine, vanished like mists in the effort to reply. For, see! sixty generations have come and gone, crop after crop of men have been reaped by the mower Death, since, in an obscure and lonely village of a remote and despised province of the Roman empire, a babe was born whose reputed parents were poor, Jewish peasants; a carpenter's son, who, without culture, without social position, without political power, uttered words that have ever since moulded the lives of the greatest, the most powerful, the best, the wisest, aye, and the vilest also, of the most enlightened continents of the world. History, since this young man died, has been a mere record of struggles either to assert or resist his dominion. He left no written word; and yet the human race has bowed before the reports of his sayings by the waysides of Galilee and the deserts of Judea, to a group of fishermen and crowds of the despised of the earth. I never saw a church in these frontier settlements without feeling a sense of awe as I thought of the origin of the religion it represented. Scenes like these and thoughts like these opened the heart to reply, in the words of earnest Peter, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

What the Telegraph did to a minister.

Of all the freaks of the telegraph, the following is the most laughable which has come under our personal knowledge. Not long since a graduate from one of eastern theological schools was called to a pastoral charge of a church in the extreme southwest. When about to start for his new parish he was unexpectedly detained by the incapacity of his Presbytery to ordain him. In order to explain his non-arrival at the appointed time, he sent the following telegram to the deacons of the church:—'Presbytery lacked quorum to ordain.'—In the course of it's journey the message got strangely metamorphosed, and reached the astonished deacons in this shape:—'Presbytery tacked a worm on to Adam.' The roster church officers were greatly discomposed and mystified, but after grave consultation concluded it was a facetious way of announcing that he had got married, and accordingly proceeded to provide lodgings for two instead of one.—Boston Traveller.

Sabbath Schools.

The training of Teachers.

The following admirable report, by Rev. Mr. Vincent, Conductor, contains in a nutshell the wisdom of the replies made at the late New York Sunday-school Institute to the questions, 'Why should our Sunday school teachers receive some preparatory training for their work?' and 'What should this training comprise?'

The answers to the first question, as returned by the members of the Institute, may be grouped under three general heads: 1. The nature of the work. 2. The infinite importance of the work. 3. The example of the best workmen.

1. The nature of the work requires preparatory training. Those engaged in it are teachers and trainers. Ignorance cannot teach. Untrained workmen may do damage. The blind cannot lead the blind. Therefore let sowers be trained for the sowing, vine-dressers for the pruning and the tending, under-shepherds for the feeding and the leading.

II. The infinite importance of the work: 1. Its source; 2. Its subjects; 3. Its instrument.

1. Its source. It is from God, and for God. One of the answers said: 'The Lord's work should be well done.'

2. Its subjects. The souls of men. One of the replies reads: 'The teacher is to make imperishable records on immortal souls.'

3. Its instruments. The vast, mysterious treasure house of revelation. 'Shall a teacher, asks one, 'be trained in order to teach arithmetic, and shall he not be trained in order to teach the Word of God?' Says another, 'Poor mortals will do this work but defectively, even with the best of training.'

III. The example of the best workmen. Jesus

prepared for thirty years before he publicly taught. Paul was three years in preparation. Preachers of the gospel prepare for their work, and one of the answers asks: 'Is not the work of the Sunday school teacher much the same as that of a preacher?' Says one: 'Their work is the same in kind, and differs only in degree.' 'The ministers form the right arm of the church, Sunday school teachers the left; most not this arm be trained that it may have strength to do good service?'

'What should this training comprise?' Substantially, eight answers were given to this question:

1. Personal experience of the truth as revealed in the Bible. 'An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.' Clear views of Scripture truth require personal experience.

2. A good knowledge of common English branches.

3. The habit of independent thinking.

4. A knowledge of the Bible, including Sacred Geography, ancient manners and customs, principles of interpretation, the plan of salvation, and the prominent doctrines of religion.

5. A knowledge of the art of teaching and governing, of the art of securing attention, of the art of questioning, adapting instruction, employing illustrations, &c.

6. The study of human nature, especially of child nature—its difficulties, peculiarities, demands.

7. Experience in teaching. Actual practice.

8. Spiritual inspiration from above. One answer says, 'The baptism of the Holy Ghost; another, 'The habit of prayer; another gave this only reply: 'The closet.'—Times & Witness.

Agriculture, &c.

U. S. Agricultural Report for October.

Although a final and definite estimate of the amount of wheat harvested cannot be made until the next report, the reports to the Department show that the sum total in bushels will exceed that of any harvest hitherto gathered in this country. It will exceed the yield of last year by 40,000,000 to 50,000,000 bushels. As an approximate estimate upon the present data, 120,000,000 to 125,000,000 bushels may be received as the crop of 1867. The Southern States show material enlargement in the area of wheat, from the evident intention to become more nearly self-supporting and independent than formerly. This is particularly noticeable in Virginia, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Arkansas.

The quality of wheat is greatly superior to that of last year. It is almost universally sound and dry, but in many localities there may be found from a third to a half deficient in weight, lacking in plumpness or slightly shrivelled, and passing as No. 2, being less than 58 pounds to the bushel.

OATS, by aggregate estimate, will exceed 280,000,000 bushels, or about three per cent. above that of 1866.

RYE.—The estimate for all the States, except those on the Pacific coast, is 21,000,000 bushels, an increase of four per cent. over last year.

BARLEY.—The crop is slightly deficient; about 500,000 bushels, or four per cent., as compared with that of last year.

BEANS and PEAS are more than an average crop.

CORN.—The quality is uniformly good. The value of the entire crop, after the reduction of the deficiency in the Ohio valley, and allowing for the increase in almost all the other States, will be greater not only in cash, but in intrinsic life-sustaining and pork-producing power than that of last year. The Sorghum interest has greatly declined. The frost has injured the crop in many places. The average is much reduced, and dependency is evident in the feeling of many growers.

BUCKWHEAT.—This crop will scarcely equal last year. The potato crop is a poor one this year. A good tobacco product is indicated in the principal tobacco growing sections.

SUGAR.—Louisiana, the only State producing cane sugar to any extent, reports an increase of seven hundred and twenty per cent. over the small yield of last year.

COTTON.—Complete estimates will be made on the receipt of the November returns. The returns for October indicate a considerable increase in South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama; about the same yield as last year in Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee, and a marked diminution in Texas and Louisiana. All estimates below two million bales, of five hundred pounds each, are decidedly fallacious, while present indications favor two and a half millions. Old wheat shows a reduction as compared with last year, when old stock was also small; the stock of old wheat has not been reduced so low for many years, if ever.—W. & R.

FOUR CROPS A YEAR.—A William's Bon Chretien pear-tree, in the garden of William Sharp, a working gardener in Arundel, has, he informs us, borne four crops this year. The first crop was gathered at the beginning of September, and the pears were the size that fruit of this description usually are; the second was gathered on the 13th inst., being about two-thirds as large as the first; the third and fourth crops are still growing, and are respectively of the size of walnuts and filberts. There was rather more than a month between the budding of each crop, and when the first was gathered the fourth was in flower.—West Sussex Gazette.