

Youths' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, October 13th, 1867.

ACTS XXIV. 14-27: Felix trembled. Esther II. 1-11: Mordecai and Esther. Recite—CORINTHIANS XI. 24-27.

Sunday, October 20th, 1867.

ACTS XXV. 1-16: Paul accused before Festus, Esther II. 12-23: Esther made Queen. Recite—PSALM 133.

The Door that is always open.

A friend of the chaplain had been speaking to the children, and at the close of the services a young man, much affected, came to him and said, "I will tell you an incident that you can relate when you talk to children."

There was a pious mother in New Hampshire—a widow, with an only son. The mother's heart was bound up in this boy. Every thing she could do to make him happy was done; and above all, she sought to keep him from bad company, and to lead him to Jesus, that he might become his disciple. The boy had a loving heart, and God had given him one of the best of mothers, but he unfortunately found bad associates, and gave himself up to their counsels, to the great grief of his suffering mother.

Finally the lad was induced to run away. He directed his course to the sea coast and shipped on board a vessel for a long voyage. From this he exchanged to another, so that it was full three years before he returned to his native land. During this time, as it often happens, the "prodigal" boy came to himself. He remembered the prayers of the devout old mother in New Hampshire. He sought and obtained a Bible, to read over again the Scriptures which she had so often read to him. With a broken heart he asked the forgiveness of his heavenly Father, and determined to take the first opportunity to return to the home of his mother, and relieve the anxiety that he knew must be crushing her heart. Perhaps she had died under the dreadful blow which his conduct had inflicted upon her! How this terrible thought quickened his conviction of his sins and his penitence before God. Immediately upon reaching port and securing his discharge, he started for his New Hampshire home. It was late in the evening when he reached his native village. With what a hurried step and beating heart he turned his course to his mother's cottage! He could see no light from the windows as he approached the house. What tumultuous thoughts filled his heart! Was she still alive! Would her worn face, if living, show the consequences of his misconduct! How would she receive him!

He thought she had probably retired for the night if still at home. He would go round to the outer door, he said to himself, and see if it was open, but would not make a noise to disturb her, if she had gone to her rest. The door opened silently under his hand. He passed on to the door of the sitting-room, and trying carefully the latch, it answered at once to his touch. The movement was so quiet that the only occupant of the room remained undisturbed. There sat his mother by the fireside with her Bible closed in her lap. She had evidently just arisen from her knees. The tender, tearful face told sooner, and surer than words for whom that evening prayer had been offered. Stepping quietly across the room, the boy (or rather the young man, for three years and rough exercise had made a great change in his appearance,) knelt down and buried his face in his mother's lap. He could only say, "Mother forgive me!" He felt the touch of her trembling hand upon his head, and the silent dropping of her tears. She pressed him to her heart, and kneeling by his side, thanked God that a mother's prayers had been answered.

After recovering a little from the mingled joy and sorrow of the hour, the boy turning to his mother, said to her,

"Did you know that your door was unlocked?"

"Oh yes!" was the answer. "Don't you think it a risk to have your door unlocked so late in the evening, as you are so far from the village?"

"That door," the mother answered, "has not been locked for three years. Since the night my boy left me I have never shut the bolt. I have continued praying for him, and expecting his return. I have left the door open, so if he came in the night, as I thought he might, he would know that I was waiting for him."

The broken-hearted, but doubly forgiven son—forgiven of God and of his injured mother—could only respond with tears to this touching evidence of the unquenchable power of a mother's love. He had grievously sinned, but the door of forgiveness and of affection had never been closed. Even in the first bitter hour of disappointment and wounded love, the door had been left unfastened and had remained unbarred day and night until the prodigal's return.

Thus, dear young readers, He waits for us who once died for us. We wander far from him. We grieve the Holy Spirit. But the door is open! The Saviour's heart is never barred. Like the mother, he not only offers daily prayers in our behalf, but he ever liveth to intercede for us. We shall find when we come, with trembling hearts and weeping eyes, that they are waiting for us.

"All heaven is waiting to resound The dead's alive, the lost is found." —Zion's Herald.

Consecrating the gift of Speech.

Mr. Cooper was sitting under the shade of a large elm in front of his dwelling, conversing with a visitor from a neighboring town. As the sun was getting low, a laboring man passed them, on his way home. He bowed to Mr. Cooper who returned the salutation.

"A pleasant countenance, that," said the visitor, referring to the countenance of the laborer.

"Yes, his countenance is the index of his disposition," said Mr. Cooper.

"What is his employment?"

"He is a carpenter. He is very industrious in his business, and is also, I trust, a laborer together with God. He is a useful man."

"Useful in a religious point of view?"

"Yes I know of no one in the church who does more good than he does."

"I have seen some who were always bringing in the subject of religion on all occasions, and it seemed to me they did more harm than good. Men get a prejudice against religion by having it thrust on their attention at all times."

"That is true. Injudicious conversation on the subject of religion often does harm. This man never offends in that way. He is a singularly discreet man. He has much of the wisdom of the serpent, with the harmlessness of the dove. When he was converted he was very poor. His family was in poor health, and it took all his means and time to provide for them the necessities of life. He had no money to do good with. He said he had nothing but the gift of speech to devote to Christ, and he seemed to have lived under the habitual impression that the chief use of his tongue was to speak for Christ. He has certainly used that gift very judiciously and very efficiently. He is never obtrusive, and never leaves one in an uncomfortable state of mind in consequence of what he has said to him. I have never heard any, not even the enemies of religion, find fault with him for bringing the subject of religion to their attention."

"He must be a very remarkable man."

"The secret of his power lies, I think, in the abounding love of Christ which fills his soul."

"The consecration of the gift of speech to Christ is a duty incumbent on all his followers. The consecration may not require every one to speak to men respecting Christ as frequently as the carpenter above mentioned did; but it will require them to use the gift of speech at all times in accordance with his will. It will prevent all foolish talking that is not suitable to the purity and dignity of the Christian character. It will prevent all depreciatory, not to say slanderous, remarks respecting others. It will prevent all careless and inaccurate statements. It will prevent the utterance of anything adapted to do harm.

Sound speech that cannot be condemned is a great desideratum. Christians generally do not differ sufficiently from men of the world in the gift of speech. Not that they should adopt a religious dialect, or offend in any degree against the courtesies of life. They should not adopt the dialect of the wicked but should use the gift of speech at all times according to the will of Christ.

Sensationalism in the Pulpit.

On this subject the Christian World says:—Everyone has observed the growing sensationalism of the present age. In business, in amusements, in literature effect is the first and grand object kept in view. That which will most quickly awaken surprise, horror, sorrow, joy, or any other emotion, is in the greatest request. Blondin, Ethardo, Leotard, periling their lives, gather eager crowds. Novels and poems that enter as closely as decency will admit, into the glaring crimes of society, secure thousands of enthusiastic readers. This same spirit is pervading the professedly Christian Church to a lamentable extent. In the Established Church it is most fully manifest. We see it in the millinery and buffoonery of ritualism. Silly women, and more silly young men, are being led captive by its foolery. We do not wonder that the child who was taken on the Saturday to a pantomime, and on the Sunday to the High Church, should ask the parent, "Where is the clown?" The juvenile mind could at once discern that the pleasure-seeking of the week-day, and the quasi worship of the Sabbath, were but attendancies on sensational performances. In Nonconformity we see it in spirit developing itself in other ways. It is not long since that a Dissenting preacher drew large audiences to hear "a sermon in blank verse." Then another announced, "a sermon in words of one syllable." Whilst a third sought popularity by placarding the walls with the most ridiculous titles of ensu-ing deliverances. Within the last few weeks a gentleman has been announced to preach in Bedfordshire whose recommendation is that he is "the smallest living preacher, being only one inch taller than Tom Thumb." And now, we are credibly informed, there has lately been officiating in a metropolitan Baptist chapel a gentleman who spouts his discourses by, show-manlike, exhibiting various articles illustrative of his discourse. Thus, for example, the suffering of Christ is illustrated by a crown of thorns; the power of Jesus to draw men to Him is illustrated by a magnetic hammer, and nails of varied sizes! What shall we say to these things? Are they not saddening? Do they not reveal a decidedly unhealthy state of the religious life? Do they not lay our Christian practice open to

the attack of the scoffer? That good may be done by a sermon in blank-verse, or a sermon from a Lilliputian, or a sermon illustrated by pictures, and other tangible objects, we do not deny. That a converted prize-fighter, a dwarf, or a giant has a right to preach the Gospel, if he feel called thereto, cannot be questioned. A golden harvest may be reaped from grain sown by an ignorant, diseased, enfeebled sower. Ruskin well observes, "Much of what is great and to all men beneficial has been wrought by those who neither intended nor knew the good they did." But should the Church of Christ prefer such agency? Is it right to trade on the former degradation, or the present size, age, or colour of the preacher? Do we not lower man's estimate of the ministerial employment, which, of all others, is the most honourable and solemn? One thing is certain, we foster in the public mind a yearning after novelties, which, gratified once, must be followed by others still more surprising. Thus we shall dwarf men's mental faculties, and,—what will be "the queen bee in the hive of our errors and misfortunes?"—we shall rob the simple Gospel "of its influence and the good old paths of their attractions."

The old Organ-player.

Christian character is one of the best safeguards against poverty, and always helps to make even poverty respectable and comfortable. Dr. Guthrie gives a striking illustration of this in a sketch of his pastoral visits. He says:

I had met little else than sights of dirt, poverty and misery, in all shapes and forms. In one large building, swarming with inhabitants, I hardly found a family who enjoyed the ordinary comforts of life, or made any profession of religion. It was depressing, I may say, heart-breaking work. Saddened and wearied, and wearied because saddened, I at length opened a door, to be as much astonished as the traveller when he lights on an oasis amid the desert sands.

The door opened on an apartment lighted by windows whole and clean, neither patched with paper, nor stuffed with rags, nor crused with dirt like bottles of old wine; a floor white with washing and sprinkled with yellow sand, stretched to the fireplace, where the flames, reflected from shining brasses, danced merrily in the grate over a well-swept hearth-stone. Toasting on a screen hung a pair of English blankets in ample folds; the furniture, polished like a mirror, gleamed in the light of a cheerful fire, and around the whitewashed walls hung a variety of neatly-framed prints and pictures. The room had an aspect of tidiness and comfort anywhere pleasant to see, but there surprising. And I remember, as if it were yesterday, of saying to myself before I had crossed the threshold or asked one question, This is the house of a church-going family! So it proved to be. It was a Bethel; God was in that place; and though, like the patriarch, I was in a sort of wilderness, this pleasant sight was a reality—no vision, like the ladder and angels of his dream.

Those who knew Edinburgh some five and twenty years ago, may recollect an old man with a face frightfully scarred by small pox, and his gray head swathed in yards of flannel, who, sat the live-long day at the top of the mound, grinding music, of a kind, from a barrel-organ. He and his wife, a decent couple, belonged to my church; and how pleased was I to find that this bright, comfortable room was the organist's home. Blind among neighbors who labored under no such disadvantage and deprivation, his was the only house there where dirt might be excused, and signs of poverty expected. It was remarkable by their absence; and the key to this material difference lay in the moral difference between him and his neighbors.

They never went to church; he did. They had no respect for the Sabbath; he kept it holy unto the Lord. They had no religion; he was a man of devout habits. They indulged their vices; he practised the virtues of Christianity. So, even in this world, his religion was of more advantage to him than their eyes were to them. It made him careful, and frugal, and temperate. This, though his only means of maintenance was the charity of such Samaritans as did not pass by on the other side, he lived amid comfort to a good old age, and left behind him at his death, not only the memory of an honest and upright life, but moneys in the bank not very much short of two hundred pounds sterling. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

God counts.

A brother and sister were playing in the dining-room, when their mother set a basket of oakes on the tea-table, and went out.

"How nice they look!" said the boy, reaching to take one. His sister earnestly objected and even drew back his hand, repeating that it was against their mother's direction.

"She did not count them," said he.

"But perhaps God did," answered the sister. So he withdrew from the temptation, and, sitting down, seemed to meditate. "You are right," replied he, looking at her with a cheerful yet serious air: "God does count; for the Bible says, the hairs of our head are all numbered."

Inclement Sundays.

The Lord's day was the delight of Archbishop Leighton, as it is of all who know how to rejoice in the resurrection of Christ. It is said that he would repair to God's house with a willing spirit, even when his body was infirm.

One rainy Sunday, when he was unwell, he persisted in attending church, and said, in excuse for his apparent rashness,—

"Were the weather fair, I would stay at home; but since it is foul, I must go; lest I be thought to countenance, by my example, the irreligious practice of letting trivial hindrances keep us back from public worship."

The spirit which animated him may well be recommended to all believers who are ready for trivial reasons to absent themselves from public worship on the Lord's day.

HOLIDAY EXERCISES FOR YOUNG LADIES AT THE SEA-SIDE, WHEN THEY HAVE GOT NOTHING ELSE TO DO.—THEOLOGY.—1.

Do you think that curates are sufficiently awake to their duties as croquet players? 2. For what reason would you have the sermon omitted? 3. You regard the High Church as aristocratic. Give a second reason for this view, in addition to the fact that Patristic means Patrician theology. 4. Distinguish between a moveable feast and a picnic. 5. Why would you not be married on a Friday? 6. State whether you are a Ritualist, and if so, whether the persons who educated you have since removed to an asylum. 7. Are you aware that when in Scotland you are a Dissenter? 8. Do you not think that a bishop's wife ought to have a title? 9. If you were a parochial clergyman's wife, should you think it wiser to insult your Dissenters, or to treat them with silent contempt? 10. Show that though there is no objection to complaining loudly if a preacher gives you an extra ten minutes, it would be vulgar to express impatience at being detained at the Opera until 1.30.—Punch.

A minister once prayed in the pulpit that "the Lord would bless the congregation assembled, and that portion of it which was on the way to church, and those who were at home getting ready to come, and that in his infinite patience he would grant the benefit of the benediction to those who reached the house of God just in time for that." The clergyman succeeded in breaking up a bad habit which had resisted all legitimate appeals.

It is a fine thing, says the Country Parson, to ripen without shrivelling, to reach the calmness of age and yet keep the warm heart and ready with the sympathy of youth.

OILING THE SEA.—An experienced sea-captain writes that he has been at sea for twenty-eight years, the master of a vessel for the last ten years, and during that time he saved the vessel under his command twice by, "oiling the sea." He writes that "When the master of a ship cannot get out of a storm—that is, when a ship is disabled and he has to take the heft of the gale—if he has oil on board, let him start two or three gallons over the side of the ship. This will give the ship smooth water to windward, and then the oil allowed to run drop by drop is all that is required; for as soon as the sea comes in contact with the oil it breaks, and the ship is in smooth water as long as the oil is allowed to run. In 1864, in the heaviest gale of wind I ever saw, I lost all my sails, then the rudder; and I knew the vessel could not have ridden the sea for an hour, if I had not had oil on board. Five gallons of oil lasted me fifty-six hours, and this saved the vessel, cargo, and lives on board."—Scientific American.

GOLDEN WORDS FOR DAILY USE.

Selected from C. H. Spurgeon's "Morning by Morning."

OCTOBER. 20 Sunday. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, Psa. ciii. 10.

Every mitigating circumstance is mercy, and even the chastisements themselves are mercies, as means of grace used by our gracious Father for our profit.

21. Monday. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, Lam. iii. 22.

Is this world we must expect tribulation, both various and grievous, but they can never be equal to our deservings, and it always becomes us to sing of sparing mercy.

22. Tuesday. Looking unto Jesus, Heb. xii. 2.

We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings: it is what Jesus is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul.

23 Wednesday. Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body, 1 Cor. xv. 44.

Blessed is death, since it, through the Divine power, disrobes us of this week day garment, to clothe us with the wedding-garment, of incorruption.

24 Thursday. The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, John xvii. 22.

Christ hath put the flagon of his love and grace to the believer's lip, and bid him drink on for ever. What truer proof of fellowship can heaven or earth afford?

25 Friday. Our heart shall rejoice in Him, Psa xxxiii. 21.

Blessed fact, that Christians can rejoice even in the deepest distress. Although trouble may surround them, they still sing; and like many birds, they sing best in their cages.

26. Saturday. At evening time it shall be light, Zech. xiv. 7.

Ripe fruit of choice experience are gathered as the rarest of life's evening. The flashes of the fire of youth are gone, but the more real flames of earnest feeling remains.