

Months' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, July 11th, 1867. Acts xx. 17-38. Paul at Ephesus. 2 Kings xxii. 1-20. Josiah's good reign.

Sunday, August 18th, 1867. Acts xxi. 1-19. Paul determined to go to Jerusalem. 2 Kings xxii. 1-20. Josiah's good reign. Recite—Joshua iii. 14-17.

Madge; or, the Broken Wine-cup.

The robins and bluebirds hopping from one leafless bough to another, and the bright yellow crickets peeping out from under their snowy counterpane, said spring had come. Now and then the leaden clouds parted, and let down a bright streak of sunshine, by way of encouragement to birds and bees; but the wind was icy cold, and little Madge, as she crept slowly along on the sheltered side of the street, wrapped her tattered shawl more closely around her.

If her cheeks had not been almost as blue as her eyes, and her short flaxen curls tucked back under an ugly old hood, fashioned by dame Poverty out of shreds and patches, one would have exclaimed, "What a pretty child!"

It were easy to imagine, perhaps, that a few good dinners, one of Hans Anderson's story books, and a pretty blue frock, might transform this sad little waif into a lovely, laughing fairy—a bright bit of sunshine—that many a grand, gloomy mansion would be glad to cheer its loneliness. But Madge was innocent of good dinners—equally innocent of blue frocks and story books.

All the romance and beauty of her life might have been put in a nutshell; but the sympathy which every good child has with nature, she showed just now by stooping down to caress a tiny blade of grass, reaching up towards the light from between the close paving stones; fit emblem of herself, crushed and trampled on, but struggling with all her might towards the true and beautiful.

Will some kind angel help little Madge? The great stone houses looked coldly down, and from the windows of one she saw children pointing their fingers at her, whether in scorn or pity, she could not tell, but it brought the hot blood to her cheeks, in spite of the cold.

"He said I must beg!" she muttered to herself; "but I won't be a beggar! I'll work—do anything—O, if somebody only wanted a little girl!" and she clutched her hands together despairingly, and the big tears rolled down her cheeks.

But that would never do. The sun was almost down, and so, for the twentieth time, perhaps, that day, she knocked timidly at a side-door.

"Please, ma'am, do you know of any one that wants a little girl?"

"Faith! an' I don't; an' is it yerself that's wantin' the place?" asked Bridget, eyeing her curiously.

"Stand aside, Bridget," said a pleasant voice; "let me see the child. How old are you, little girl?"

"Twelve, last February, ma'am."

"And small of your age," added the lady, thoughtfully.

"Indeed, that's thrue for ye. She's no bigger nor my thumb! an' it's the hungry look she has in the eyes. Och! haven't I seen that same in the ould countree!" added Bridget, softly.

"Where do you live?" asked the lady.

"On Twenty-Ninth street, near the market. And O, if you please, I would be so glad of a place! I can do a great deal, indeed I can—I am used to work; and to tell the truth, lady, I dare not go home. Father drinks, and he is terrible when drunk; he beats mother and the children, and he would kill me if I should come home, for he sent me out to beg; but I said I would never beg! I would find a place to work. O, don't somebody want a little girl?"

The lady shook her head somewhat sadly. "I don't know of any one just now; and the truth is, child, you are too small and delicate to be of much use. You had better go back home; there is no other way, and if your father is so bad, why, your mother must complain to the proper authorities, and have him taken care of."

"O ma'am," said Madge, earnestly, "she would never do that, I'm sure, for she often cries, and tells us children we ought to love him in spite of his faults, for it is only the liquor that puts the evil in him; and there are those that will never let him be sober a moment, if they can help it."

"The more shame to em," muttered Bridget, as she slipped a couple of biscuits into the child's apron, and hurried her out of the door.

O gentle-hearted children, safely sheltered in the dear home nest, do you shed one tear for little Madge? taint, weary, and sick at heart, yet bravely daring to tread the rough and toilsome ways of the world alone, if she might but escape—think of it—escape from the horrible cruelties of a father—no, no longer a father, a fiend, made so by alcohol.

But there was one green oasis in all this boundless desert, for Madge. It was where Aunt Rachel's great heart beat warm and strong under her old Scotch plaid; where the loaf was never too small nor the fire too scant to share with a neighbor, though both were small and scant enough. Thither she bent her weary footsteps.

"O Aunt Rachel!" she cried, throwing herself into the arms extended to receive her, "it's of no use. I've tramped and tramped, all day. Nobody wants me. They say, perhaps, I am a

bad child; or, I'm too small; or, they don't want a beggar's brat; or—

"Hut, tut! tut! I would na say it or think o' it again," said Aunt Rachel, tenderly stroking her hair; "sit down, dearie, an' rest yourself a bit, while I put a drawin' o' tea in the pot, for ye need a drap o' it sairly."

And so, with Bridget's cold biscuits, a hot cup of tea, and a slice from Rachel's well saved loaf, with hunger for sauce, they made a "merry feast," Madge forgetting, for the moment, her weariness and cares.

Supper ended, Madge prepared to go, but Rachel protested.

"Dinna gae hame the night, lassie; bide wi' me; it waur the mither's wish, for I saw her the day. So lang wi' ye to bed, whilst I sit beside ye an' read a comforth word from the ould Book."

Madge obeyed gladly, and soothed by the sweet promises of Holy Writ, she soon fell asleep.

Now, in the silent watches of the night, Rachel bethought herself of a gentleman for whom her deceased husband was once gardener. So, early on the following day, she sought him out, told him that Madge was a good child, quick and willing, and her "mither" a real lady; though, to be sure, her father was "nae letter than he should be." And by dint of much entreaty, she obtained a promise that he would persuade his wife to take her on trial.

"Now, lassie," said the good soul, after conducting Madge to her new home, "tak' a bit o' advice fra an ould woman. It isn't for a bairnie to blazon abroad the misdeeds o' its own father. Say naught o' him if ye can help it; but pray for him an' the mither that lo'es ye sae dearly; and for the rest, remember that even a child may be known by his doin's, whether they be pure, and whether they be right. Now may the Laird ha'e ye in his holy keeping."

So, with old Rachel's blessing, reating like holy oil on her head, she went to her new work.

New Year's day came round in due time, with its gifts and greetings, and found Madge still at Mr. Howard's, the patient nurse-girl, the willing waiting maid, swift to run, slow to speak, quick to appreciate kindness, winning her way to all hearts, from the stately grand dame, in her rustling brocade, to bright-haired Bertie, nestling to sleep in her arms, yet ever keeping locked in her own bosom the story of her grief, which her occasional visits home made ever present.

She was by this time accustomed to plenty and splendor. Her face had forgotten its pinched look, and her hands had lost their old trick of clutching at the tattered shawl. And to-day, of all days, surrounded by joyousness and good cheer, one would have said she might be happy. But to day, of all days, her thoughts were far away down Twenty-Ninth street, and her heart carried its old burden. So, when Bertie was snug in his crib, and the family, with perhaps a lingering guest, had gathered around the fireside, she threw her mantle over her head, rushed out into the starlight.

Then she thought how it would seem once more to wander around the street, hungry and cold, and not daring to go home. Then gliding around in front of the great mansion, she nodded at it, and laughed to think how it seemed to invite her, with a thousand pleasant glances, to its friendly shelter. Then she stepped up on the verandah, and as the damask curtain was turned aside, she looked in upon the happy group. The noble gentleman and lady who had given her a home—the aged grandmother, with the courtly manners and stately dress of fifty years ago—Master Clarence, sometimes so teasing, sometimes so grand, with his gentlemanly airs—and young Master Frank, a ways her friend and champion.

There were rich curtains and carpets, and handsome furniture, costly pictures, and gleaming chandeliers; everything that goes to make up a home of taste and elegance; and Madge loved beauty as naturally as bees love sunshine. But one thing marred the scene. Gazing down through the gorgeous vista, she saw, at the farther end, a shining sideboard, loaded with wine-glasses and decanters.

Yes; the destroyer of her home was there! not coarse, and vulgar, and bloated, to be sure, but far more dangerous! He wore a deceitful smile—a bewildering grace. He was a merry god, garlanded with flowers, and leading Pleasure by the hand.

On the wine-cup she could never gaze without a shudder; but just now she did gaze, till all that bright scene faded away from before her sight, and she beheld in its stead, a wretched room, with scanty, broken furniture, a few dying embers on the hearth, a few dry crusts the only food, a handful of rags the only covering, the mother and little ones huddled sadly together, awaiting some one with fear which amounted, in the younger ones to terror. Then she strained every nerve to listen for the dreaded footsteps, borne entirely away by her imagination, till, suddenly becoming conscious that she was observed, with a low cry, she darted swiftly away.

"Did you see Madge at the window? how wild she looked!" exclaimed Frank. "What could have been the matter?"

"Matter? hump!" said Clarence, willing enough to tease his younger brother. "Perhaps she was waiting for an invitation to take a sea in the parlor—the impertinent little beggar!"

She is not an impertinent beggar—say that again, at your peril, Master Clarence!" replied Frank, warmly. "She would grace any parlor in the land; and I think it a shame she should be excluded from the society she would adorn, just because she is poor."

"O, our little nurse-girl is a lady, is she?" replied Clarence, with a provoking drawl;

"pray, ask her if she will condescend to permit you the honor of pledging her in a glass of wine. Come, I dare you to show your gallantry!"

"I'll do it," said Frank; "and you shall see how gracefully she will respond. There she comes, now," and springing quickly up, he intercepted her as she was passing through the back parlor.

"Stop, Madge!" he cried, hastily filling two dainty glasses from the sideboard, and holding them aloft; "this is New Year's day, you know, and mamma's visitors have been bestowing all manner of good wishes on her; allow me the honor—will you take a glass of wine with me?"

Madge stood like a statue. The wine danced and sparkled before her eyes, every drop a serpent!

"Take it—taste it," whispered Frank, "just because of Clarence—because he—"

"Must I touch it? Do you want me to drink it?" asked Madge, growing paler every moment.

"Yes," said Frank, hastily; "take it, if you only touch your lips to it, or he will say you are no lady."

"O, yes, of course she is," said Clarence, tauntingly.

"Well, if I must—if you want me to so much," cried Madge, with a sudden flush, "I'll take it, to oblige you, but I'll never drink it—never. This is what I'll do with it!" and she hurled it violently against the marble mantel.

The glass was shattered to atoms; the wine mingled with the rose hues of the carpet.

Clarence frowned; Frank stood perfectly agast.

"What is the meaning of this disturbance?" asked Mr. Howard, in an angry tone; "what do I see? whose work is this?"

Clarence pointed towards Madge, while Frank exclaimed bitterly:

"How could you?"

"O, how could I help it?" cried Madge, wringing her hands wildly; "how could I help it? There's death in it; there's woe in it; there's poverty and starvation, and hunger and cold blows and curses, and broken hearts, and a thousand serpents gnawing the guilty soul!"

"The girl's insane," said Mr. Howard to his wife; for by this time nearly the whole family were gathered around.

"Indeed, I am not, sir," continued Madge, nothing daunted; "it was a reckless thing to throw the glass; but O, sir, if you knew what I know—if you could see what I have seen! Your children have a beautiful home—everything to make them happy! Can you imagine what it would be for them to live without any of these lovely things—books, pictures, toys—without even the plainest necessities of life—to see them wander barefoot and hungry through the streets, and then back to their broken-hearted mother, and she weeping because she knew not where the morning meal was to come from? And suppose they dreaded to hear your footsteps, and knew by sad experience that they had reason to dread it? O, forgive me, sir, I have such a father! I wish he was like you! It was the wine-cup that made him what he is, and that made our home what it is; and sooner than touch or taste the poison, ten thousand times I'd rather wander out again from this blessed home you have given me, into the hunger and cold and darkness."

Madge sobbed convulsively, Frank cried as heartily, and Mrs. Howard was in tears.

"Poor child," said she, tenderly, "I thought she had a history!"

But now the old lady, the grandmother, in her rich brocade, and with her silvery hair and keen black eyes, having hitched her armchair to the middle door, began to take the child's part, as a grandmother should.

"She is right! the girl is right!" she exclaimed, with authority, striking her goldbeaded cane forcibly upon the floor. "She did well to break the glass and spill the wine, and rouse us from our deadly stupor; she did well to flash us with her little vixenish tongue, for our selfish indifference and careless ease, when thousands are going the downward road to ruin, perhaps because of this very temptation placed before them in just such homes as this. Who hath woe? who hath contention?" she continued, as if talking to herself; "who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? They that tarry long at the wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red. At the last it lieth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Then, in a broken voice, she cried:

"O, Mortimer you had a brother once—do you know where he is? have you seen him for years? is he among the living or the dead? One day, when the fumes of wine had mounted to his brain, he quarrelled with you, and God forgive him—with his mother, have we ever seen him since? It was wine that destroyed him. O! have warned you before, and I warn you now again, of this pernicious fashion. Banish it for your own children's sake." And the poor old lady swayed to and fro, moaning, "O, my boy! O, my lost boy!"

Mr. Howard, who had been painfully abstracted, now roused himself.

"Clarence, Frank, all of you, retire. I will speak with Madge in the morning."

So they stole quietly out, one by one, and Mr. Howard gave his arm to his aged mother, and conducted her to her room, and ere long silence brooded over the household.

True to his promise, the gentleman had a long conversation with Madge next morning, not to reprove, but to soothe and comfort her. Then he went to her miserable home, and found whom do you suppose?—his long-lost, degraded brother.

Under a disguised name, yearning for home and kindred, he had come back to the old place; but, after all, his pride would not allow

him to seek a reconciliation with his friends; and striving to drown his wretchedness, he had of late drunk so deeply that reason was nearly dethroned; also he would have been aware, perhaps, that Madge, strangely enough, had found a home under her uncle's roof.

But was he saved? All it was a struggle! Nothing less strong than a mother's love and the power of God could have done it. He could never recall the mispent years, nor the lost health, nor the cruel deeds, but he was saved—so as by fire!

And now his family dwell in a pratty cottage, and Madge is ripening into rare beauty of mind and person.

Clarence has long since begged his lovely cousin's pardon for calling her an impertinent little beggar; and Frank is not a whit less admiring than ever.

And last, but by no means least, the wine-cup is banished from the home of the Howards; nor does it even grace the New Year's board. Little Corporal.

GOLDEN WORDS FOR DAILY USE.

Selected from C. H. Spurgeon's "Morning by Morning." August 14, Sunday. The precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 19.

1. Precious blood, which removes the stains of our abundant iniquity, and permits us to stand accepted in the Beloved, notwithstanding our constant departures and rebellions.

2. Monday. Greetings that cannot be uttered, Rom. viii. 26.

Bless and praise thy God, O Christian, that these are within thy soul such great rocks, masses of contrite feeling, that are too large to find egress by the narrow avenue of language.

3. Tuesday. Why sit we here until we die? 2 Kings vii. 3.

The Ninevites said, "Who can tell?" Act upon the same hope, and try the Lord's mercy; Jesus casts out none who come unto Him.

4. Wednesday. Is it not a little one? Gen. xix. 20.

Christian, beware how thou thinkest lightly of sin; call it not a little thing; it girded the Redeemer's head with thorns, and pierced his heart with bitter sorrow.

5. Thursday. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe, Psal. cxix. 117.

Onward, Christian, with care and caution; onward with holy fear and trembling, with faith and confidence in Jesus only, and let your prayer be, "Hold up my goings in thy paths."

6. Friday. The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps, Matt. xxv. 4.

My soul, how much thou needest this; for thy lamp will not continue to burn without it, or canst thou give light to others unless fresh oil of grace be given thee?

7. Saturday. I will rejoice over them to do them good, Jer. xxxii. 41.

Should not we utter our grateful response to such a marvelous declaration of God's love, and sing, "I will rejoice in the Lord, O my heart!"

Agriculture, &c.

About Bees.

The usual time of the issuing of a swarm is from ten o'clock in the morning till three in the afternoon. I have, however, known a swarm to rise as early as seven in the morning, and as late as five in the evening. Butler mentions an instance of one rising later than five.

When the general massacre of drones takes place, not only all those that have undergone their full transformations, but every embryo, in whatever period of its existence, shares the same fate; the maxim with bees being to attend to the general welfare of the community, not to allow those to eat that are not useful in some way.

Attention to the following particulars may guard the bees from many of their enemies, viz: frequent cleaning of the hive floors; the use of new or well-cleaned hives; the timely renewal of the coverings; and keeping the ground bare around the apiary, particularly in front of it. This last precaution may also prevent the entanglement of the bees in rubbish or long straggling vegetables, should they, on their return home, fall down through fatigue or the weight of the loads.

Bees, when swarming, are generally peaceable, and if treated gently, may be hived without danger or difficulty. A remarkable instance of their offensiveness at this period is related by Mr. Thorley. Wanting to dislodge a swarm from the branch of a nodding tree on which it had clustered, he placed the hive in the hands of a maid-servant, who, being a novice, covered her head and shoulders with a cloth to guard her face. On shaking the tree, most of the bees alighted on the cloth, and quickly crept under it, covering the girl's breast and neck up to her chin. Mr. T. impressed her with the importance of neither flinching from nor buffeting the bees, and began immediately to search for the queen, which, on finding, he gently seized and removed, but, without effecting a dislodgement of the swarm. Thus disappointed, he suspected there was a second queen present, which actually proved to be the case. On securing her and placing her in the hive, with a portion of the bees, the rest followed in multitudes, till in two or three minutes not one bee remained on the girl, who was thus released from her state of apprehension and alarm, without feeling the point of a single sting.